

POETICAL WORKS

Centenary Edition

VOL. I.



NEWARK TOWER.

He passed where Newark's stately tower
Looks out from Yarrow's birchen bower.

Lay of Last Minstrel, page 33.

POETICAL WORKS

OF

SIR WALTER SCOTT, BART.

VOL. I.



DEATH OF LORD MARMION.—PAGE 229.

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SCOTT'S POETICAL WORKS.

IT would be rash for any, who have lived only in the same age with a great poet, and still more rash for those whose earliest conceptions of poetical celebrity and poetical beauty are inseparably associated with his name and his writings, to pronounce peremptorily on the rank which may probably be assigned to him by posterity, among the classics of his native language. But without venturing on such ground as this, there are points of comparison with himself and others, which may warrantably be applied to the illustration of his genius.

In regard to the spirit which animates the poetry of Walter Scott, he stands entirely alone in his age; separated indeed so far from the tendencies of the time, that his universal popularity seems at the first glance to have in it something unaccountable. The passionate intensity and moody self-inquisition of Byron, the calm thoughtfulness and universal sympathies of Wordsworth, and the wildness of Coleridge's lyrical dreams, are in their several kinds allied to those impulses which have widest sway in these generations of our race; while other poets—Campbell with his gentle pathos, Crabbe with his melancholy anatomy of life, and Moore with his overflow of voluptuous imagery—appeal to emotions which are not so much distinctive of particular periods in the history of mankind, as common to the mind in all its ages. But the world which Scott reproduced in the midst of us, the world of feudalism and chivalry,—the transition-stage in the annals of Christian Europe—is one with which the men of modern times have very little communion or fellow-feeling; and the boldness with which he chose his themes was even exceeded by that of the tone in which he ventured to treat them; neither

jesting with his own fancies, like Pulci or Ariosto, nor, like Tasso, overlaying the essential substance of the chivalrous life with a garniture of poetry and of delicate feeling which left the genuine light of elder times but few openings to glimmer through; but grappling with his materials in the believing and lofty devotion of an historical poet, and painting for us a picture in which the fierce and fiery spirit of martial adventure inspires the leading groups, and gives the outlines of the piece, while interesting local superstitions and the ascetic religion of Catholicism, the absorbing love of country and the anomalous devotedness of feudalism, form, singly or united, the colouring which is spread over different portions of the composition.

For, in essentials, this character of historical truth does belong to the poetry of Scott; not indeed that his view of the old world is one which could have presented itself to those who lived nearer to the times he depicts; but that it is almost as near to truth as consists with the united requirements made by the purposes of his art and the temper of his age, and probably nearer to the truth than any similar attempt which has been made in modern times. Doubtless there are many instances in which he does not preserve this fidelity to the claims of his subject; but it is surprisingly preserved in his best works, and the inferiority of the others is in no small degree owing to their deficiency in it. Indeed he goes even farther than this; for he not only presents to us the scenes of old, but he invests them in a dress substantially the same as that in which they would have been clothed by poets contemporary, or nearly succeeding them, if these, for their metrical romances or their ballads of love and war, had possessed equal appliances, in a formal language, and in extended views as to the principles of the poetical art.

The Lay of the Last Minstrel is really a long border-ballad; and, inspired by the poet's early recollections and studies, and nourished not only by those copious sources of illustration of which the Border Minstrelsy furnishes abundant specimens, but by affectionate familiarity with the landscapes of his story, this work possesses, both in spirit

and in details, at once a fervour and a unity superior to any of his others. Very little, indeed, either of incident or character, would require to be withdrawn from it, as foreign to its essence.* *Marmion* is pitched in another key, but is still antique, and, though less rich in characteristic details of the olden time, and rather less free from modern admixtures, is pervaded almost throughout by the chivalrous spirit, while that spirit blazes forth at several points with a splendour which the poet elsewhere never equalled. The poem is a metrical romance of history; the full development of a species of composition in which Barbour had but faintly traced the design. *The Lady of the Lake* cannot be so readily referred to any one class of our old national poems; in which, indeed, that moving panorama of gorgeous landscapes, amidst which the personages exist, is, as a prominent feature, quite unknown. But this very feature, and the placidly romantic air which breathes through most of the adventures, at once determine its type as a kind of pastoral romance (instanced more frequently in foreign literature than in our own), and diffuse over the work a singular charm, which hides from us much vagueness, both in the characters and in the historical details of manners and ideas. *Rowley*, the next in the list, is confessedly the weakest of its author's larger poems, as it is also that in which he has removed himself farthest from his ordinary models. Defective alike in unity of spirit and in historical fidelity, it would, but for some poetical gems which sparkle through, deserve no higher name than that of a novel in verse. In the *Lord of the Isles* we behold a return to the poet's higher sources of inspiration; for we have here another metrical chronicle, a second *Marmion*, every way inferior to the first.

It is abundantly evident that the task which Scott has thus performed, of creating anew the scenes and characters of a fierce and chaotic stage of society, allowed him ample room for arousing some of the strongest emotions which poetry can awaken. Sometimes, indeed, he errs by applying himself to the excitement of feelings which, though

* See Appendix.

strictly within his limits, are not broadly enough impressed on the minds of most men to found any lively sympathy. Such are the feelings of superstitious awe and delight in supernatural invention, feelings which are chiefly addressed in his two anonymous poems, and to whose prevalence these works, equal in some points to anything in verse he ever wrote, mainly owe their want of general interest and popularity. But he far oftener throws himself on those principles which are universally sympathised with and appreciated, not indeed arousing all of them with equal skill, but compounding, out of the use he makes of all, a representation which is at once sufficiently true and widely attractive. That which was really the master-feeling of the times he delineates, the love of warlike adventure, is the path in which he has been by far most successful. In tenderness or passion he does not stand by any means first among the poets of our day; and even in those exhibitions of chivalrous generosity and lofty feeling which are so closely consonant to his stories and their actors, he is, although often delightfully felicitous, yet by no means without his equals; but there is no poet of our times, and very few in any age or country, who have portrayed with such admirable force and fire the soldier's thirst for battle, and the headlong fury of the field of slaughter. Throughout all his works there occur bursts of this sort, which would of themselves have placed him high among poets of the class, even though he had never written his noblest passages of warfare, the knightly combat of Fitzjames and Roderick, or the magnificent battle-piece which closes *Marmion*. His clear and cheerful, yet delicately sketched and poetically elevated descriptions of natural scenery, less strong in their outlines than some poetry of a similar kind, and less vivid in their colouring and *chiaroscuro* than others, but always pleasing and original, and often far more, may probably be said to be, after their warlike temper, the most distinctive feature of his poems.

If the moral tone of Scott's poetry is not high, it must be at least admitted that it is uniformly inoffensive; and if most passages excite us less violently than those of

some other poets, there is none whose works leave on the mind a more pleasing expression of content and hopefulness. Perhaps, in his views of human society, the only thing which can at all jar on the feelings of any, is that tendency to aristocratic hauteur, which, not indeed shrinking from contact with the lower orders, and willingly recognising and esteeming many of their virtues, yet considers them strictly as the dependants of higher men, and is silent on every other relation they can be supposed to hold. This feeling, so palpable both in his poetry and in his romances, is, it must be remarked, quite in keeping as a feature of the times he describes in the former class of writings; and even as an element in modern poetry, there doubtless are, after all, many who will esteem the sentiment a just one.

In skill of execution, as respects both ease of expression and melody of versification, there is in the poems an exceedingly observable progress, not at all corresponding to their respective degrees of real merit. Both in diction and in music there is a very wide distinction between the first few stanzas of the *Lay* and the most finished passages in *Rokeby* or the *Lord of the Isles*. Not less noticeable are the variations in point of poetical ornament, a thing very different from genuine poetical force or beauty. In the *Lay*, the most poetically conceived of all the works, there are wonderfully few passages of the kind that furnish showy quotations, though those of this class that do occur are of a very high order. *Marmion*, except in the Introduction, scarcely contains more; the *Lady of the Lake* possesses such far more abundantly; while *Rokeby* overflows with couplets poetically sententious; and the *Lord of the Isles* again returns towards the earlier manner.

There is one point of view in which the poems offer a very interesting subject of consideration, not for their own sake, but in their relation to those more celebrated and certainly higher works which succeeded them. They may be regarded as in some sense preparations, or, in the artist's phrase, studies, for the novels and romances. The field of speculation which is thus presented may furnish some intelligent inquirer with extremely apt materials for illus-

trating the poet's genius ; but the mine is too wealthy to be here so much as opened. It may be remarked, however, that while the latter poems in their spirit approach far nearer to the prose romance than the earlier ones, thus in some degree indicating the operations which were going on in the Author's mind, yet it is from the earlier that the romances have derived by far the most plentiful hints and materials. In the slightly sketched personages of the poems we may frequently discover elements which were expanded into the finished characters of the prose works, and this not only in the dignified and poetical, but even in the comic, as one instance of which may be cited the Friar John of Norham as the first outline of Robin Hood's Tuck. In incident, the borrowings from the poems are less direct and palpable ; and the most obvious are the obligations which, both in this and the other particular, the Monastery owes to the Lay, and Ivanhoe to Marmion. The Lady of the Lake, also, both in its scenery and its draughts of Highland character, may be considered as the preface to *Waverley*.*

(WILLIAM SPALDING.)

* Contributed to the *Encyclopædia Britannica* by the late William Spalding, Professor of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres in the University of Edinburgh.

APPENDIX.

CRITICISMS ON SCOTT'S POEMS.

Lay of the Last Minstrel.

THIS poem may be considered as an attempt to transfer the refinements of modern poetry to the matter and the manner of the ancient metrical romance. The Author, enamoured of the lofty visions of chivalry, and partial to the strains in which they were formerly embodied, seems to have employed all the resources of his genius in endeavouring to recall them to the favour and admiration of the public, and in adapting to the taste of modern readers a species of poetry which was once the delight of the courtly, but has long ceased to gladden any other eyes than those of the scholar and the antiquary. This is a romance, therefore, composed by a minstrel of the present day; or such a romance as we may suppose would have been written in modern times, if that style of composition had continued to be cultivated, and partakes consequently of the improvements which every branch of literature has received since the time of its desertion.—LORD JEFFREY, *April* 1805.

The chief excellence of *The Lay* consists in the beauty of the descriptions of local scenery, and the accurate picture of customs and manners among the Scottish Borderers at the time it refers to. The various exploits and adventures which occur in those half-civilised times, when the bands of government were so loosely twisted that every man depended for safety more on his own arm, or the prowess of his chief, than on the civil power, may be said to hold a middle rank between history and private anecdote. War is always most

picturesque where it is least formed into a science ; and the nocturnal expedition of Diomede and Ulysses to seize the chariot and horses of Rhesus, or a *raid* of the Scots or the Kerrs to drive cattle, will make a better figure in verse, than all the battles of the great King of Prussia. The *sleuth-dog*, the *beacon-fires*, the *Jedwood-axes*, the *moss-troopers*, the yell of the *slogan*, and all the irregular warfare of predatory expeditions, or feuds of hereditary vengeance, are far more captivating to the imagination than a park of artillery and battalions of well-drilled soldiers.—*Annual Review*, 1804.

It must be observed that there is this difference between the license of the old romancer, and that assumed by the Author here : the aberrations of the first are usually casual and slight ; those of the other premeditated and systematic. The old romancer may be compared to a man who trusts his reins to his horse ; his palfrey often blunders, and occasionally breaks his pace, sometimes from vivacity, oftener through indolence. The Author sets out with the intention of diversifying his journey by every variety of motion. He is now at a trot, now at a gallop ; nay, he sometimes stops, as if to

‘ Make graceful caprioles, and prance
Between the pillars.’

A main objection to this plan is to be found in the shock which the ear receives from violent and abrupt transitions. On the other hand, it must be allowed, that as different species of verse are individually better suited to the expression of the different ideas, sentiments, and passions, which it is the object of poetry to convey, the happiest efforts may be produced by adapting to the subject its most congenial structure of verse.—*Critical Review*, 1805.

Marmion.

The powerful poetry of some of the passages in this poem can receive no illustration from any praises or observations of ours. It is superior, in our apprehension, to all that the Author has hitherto produced ; and, with a few faults of diction, equal to anything that has ever been written upon similar subjects. From the moment the Author gets in sight of Flodden field, indeed to the end of the poem, there

is no tame writing, and no intervention of ordinary passages. He does not once flag or grow tedious ; and neither stops to describe dresses and ceremonies, nor to commemorate the harsh names of feudal barons from the Border. There is a flight of five or six hundred lines, in short, in which he never stoops his wing, nor wavers in his course ; but carries the reader forward with a more rapid, sustained, and lofty movement, than any epic bard that we can at present remember. —LORD JEFFREY, 1808.

The story of Marmion is made of better materials than the Lay, yet they are not so well fitted together. As a whole it has not pleased me so much—in parts it has pleased me more. There is nothing so finely conceived in the former poem as the death of Marmion : there is nothing finer in its conception anywhere. The introductory epistles I did not wish away, because, as poems, they gave me great pleasure ; but I wished them at the end of the volume, or at the beginning,—anywhere except where they were. My taste is perhaps peculiar in disliking all interruptions in narrative poetry. When the poet lets his story sleep, and talks in his own person, it has to me the same sort of unpleasant effect that is produced at the end of an act. You are alive to know what follows, and lo—down comes the curtain, and the fiddlers begin with their abominations. The general opinion, however, is with me, in this particular instance. —ROBERT SOUTHY, 1808.

Lady of the Lake.

Never, we think, has the analogy between poetry and painting been more strikingly exemplified than in the writings of Walter Scott. He sees everything with a painter's eye. Whatever he represents has a character of individuality, and is drawn with an accuracy and minuteness of discrimination, which we are not accustomed to expect from verbal description. Much of this, no doubt, is the result of genius : for there is a quick and comprehensive power of discernment, an intensity and keenness of observation, an almost intuitive glance, which nature alone can give, and by means of which her favourites are enabled to discover characteristic differences, where the eye of dulness sees nothing but uniformity ;

but something also must be referred to discipline and exercise. It is because Scott usually delineates those objects with which he is perfectly familiar, that his touch is so easy, correct, and animated. The rocks, the ravines, and the torrents, which he exhibits, are not the imperfect sketches of a hurried traveller, but the finished studies of a resident artist, deliberately drawn from different points of view; each has its true shape and position; it is a portrait; it has its name by which the spectator is invited to examine the exactness of the resemblance. The figures which are combined with the landscape are painted with the same fidelity. The boldness of feature, the lightness and compactness of form, the wildness of air, and the careless ease of attitude of these mountaineers, are as congenial to their native Highlands, as the birch and the pine which darken their glens, the sedge which fringes their lakes, or the heath which waves over their moors.—*Quarterly Review*, 1810.

The Lay, if I may venture to state the creed now established, is, I should say, generally considered as the most natural and original, Marmion as the most powerful and splendid, the Lady of the Lake as the most interesting, romantic, picturesque, and graceful of Scott's great poems.—J. G. LOCKHART, 1837.

Vision of Don Roderick.

The too monotonous close of the stanza in Don Roderick is sometimes diversified by the adoption of fourteen-foot verse, —a license in poetry which, since Dryden, has been abandoned, but which is nevertheless very deserving of revival, so long as it is only rarely and judiciously used.—*Critical Review*, 1811.

This Poem has scarcely any story, and scarcely any characters; and consists, in truth, almost entirely of a series of descriptions, intermingled with plaudits and execrations. The descriptions are, many of them, very fine, though the style is more turgid and verbose than in the better parts of Mr. Scott's other productions; but the invectives and acclamations are too vehement and too frequent to be either graceful or impressive. There is no climax or progression to relieve the ear or stimulate the imagination. The Author sets

out on the very highest pitch of his voice, and keeps it up to the end of the measure. There are no grand swells, therefore, or overpowering bursts in his song.—LORD JEFFREY, 1811.

Rokeby.

Scott has here confined himself within much narrower limits, and, by descending to the sober annals of the seventeenth century, has renounced nearly all those ornaments of Gothic pageantry, which, in consequence of the taste with which he displayed them, had been tolerated, and even admired, by modern readers. He has subjected his style to a severer code of criticism. The language of the poet is often unconsciously referred to the date of the incidents which he relates ; so that what is careless or idiomatic escapes censure, as a supposed anomaly of antique diction : and it is, perhaps, partly owing to this impression, that the phraseology of “Marmion,” and of the “Lady of the Lake,” has appeared to us to be no less faulty than that of the present poem.

But, be this as it may, we confidently persist in thinking that in this last experiment the Author's popularity will be still farther confirmed ; because we have found by experience, that, although during the first hasty inspection of the poem, undertaken for the gratification of our curiosity, some blemishes intruded themselves upon our notice, the merits of the story, and the minute shades of character displayed in the conduct of it, have been sufficient, during many succeeding perusals, to awaken our feelings, and to reanimate and sustain our attention.—*Quarterly Review*, 1813.

This production altogether abounds in imagery and description less than either of its precursors, in pretty nearly the same proportion as it contains more of dramatic incident and character. Yet some of the pictures which it presents are highly wrought and vividly coloured ; for example, the terribly animated narrative, in the fifth canto, of the battle within the hall, and the conflagration of the mansion of Rokeby.

Several defects, of more or less importance, we noticed, or imagined that we noticed, as we read. It appears like

presumption to accuse the Author of any failure in respect of costume—of the manners and character of the times which he describes—yet the impression produced on our minds by the perusal has certainly been, that we are thrown back in imagination to a period considerably antecedent to that which he intends to celebrate.—*Critical Review*, 1813.

Lord of the Isles.

Here is another genuine lay of the great Minstrel, with all his characteristic faults, beauties, and irregularities. The same glow of colouring—the same energy of narration—the same amplitude of description, are conspicuous here, which distinguish all his other productions; with the same still more characteristic disdain of puny graces and small originalities—the true poetical hardihood, in the strength of which he urges on his Pegasus fearlessly through dense and rare, and aiming gallantly at the great ends of truth and effect, stoops but rarely to study the means by which they are to be attained—avails himself, without scruple, of common sentiments and common images wherever they seem fitted for his purposes—and is original by the very boldness of his borrowing, and impressive by his disregard of epigram and emphasis.

Though bearing all these marks of the master's hand, the work before us does not come up, in interest, to the *Lady of the Lake*, or even to *Marmion*. There is less connected story; and what there is less skilfully complicated and disentangled, and less diversified with change of scene, or variety of character. In the scantiness of the narrative, and the broken and discontinuous order of the events, as well as the inartificial insertion of detached descriptions and morsels of ethical reflection, it bears more resemblance to the earliest of the Author's greater productions; and suggests a comparison, perhaps not altogether to his advantage, with the structure and execution of the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*:—for though there is probably more force and substance in the latter parts of the present work, it is certainly inferior to that enchanting performance in delicacy and sweetness, and even—is it to be wondered at, after four such publications?—in originality.

The title of "The Lord of the Isles," has been adopted, we presume, to match that of "The Lady of the Lake;" but there is no analogy in the stories—nor does the title, on this occasion, correspond very exactly with the contents. It is no unusual misfortune, indeed, for the author of a modern Epic to have his hero turn out but a secondary personage, in the gradual unfolding of the story, while some unruly underling runs off with the whole glory and interest of the poem. But here the Author, we conceive, must have been aware of the misnomer from the beginning; the true, and indeed the ostensible hero being, from the very first, no less a person than King Robert Bruce."—*Edinburgh Review*, 1815.

Bridal of Triermain.

The merit of the *Bridal*, in our estimation, consists in its perfect simplicity, and in interweaving the refinement of modern times with the peculiarities of the ancient metrical romance, which are in no respect violated. In point of interest the first and second cantos are superior to the third. One event naturally arises out of that which precedes it, and the eye is delighted and dazzled with a series of moving pictures, each of them remarkable for its individual splendour, and all contributing more or less directly to produce the ultimate result. The third canto is less profuse of incident, and somewhat more monotonous in its effect. This, we conceive, will be the impression on the first perusal of the poem. When we have leisure to mark the merits of the composition, and to separate them from the progress of the events, we are disposed to think that the extraordinary beauty of the description will nearly compensate for the defect we have already noticed.

The pictures of pure description are perpetually illuminated with reflections that bring out their colouring, and increase their moral effect: these reflections are suggested by the scene, produced without effort, and expressed with unaffected simplicity. The descriptions are spirited and striking, possessing an airiness suited to the mythology and manners of the times, though restrained by correct taste. Among the

characters, many of which are such as we expect to find in this department of poetry, it is impossible not to distinguish that of Arthur, in which, identifying himself with his original, the Author has contrived to unite the valour of the hero, the courtesy and dignity of the monarch, and the amiable weaknesses of any ordinary mortal, and thus to present to us the express lineaments of the flower of chivalry.—*Quarterly Review*, 1813.

THE
LAY OF THE LAST MINSTREL:

A POEM
IN SIX CANTOS.

*Dum relego, scripsisse pudet; quia plurima cerno,
Me quoque, qui feci iudice, digna lini.*



TO
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
CHARLES, EARL OF DALKEITH,
THIS POEM IS INSCRIBED
BY
THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

The Poem, now offered to the Public, is intended to illustrate the customs and manners which anciently prevailed on the Borders of England and Scotland. The inhabitants, living in a state partly pastoral and partly warlike, and combining habits of constant depredation with the influence of a rude spirit of chivalry, were often engaged in scenes highly susceptible of poetical ornament. As the description of scenery and manners was more the object of the Author than a combined and regular narrative, the plan of the Ancient Metrical Romance was adopted, which allows greater latitude, in this respect, than would be consistent with the dignity of a regular Poem. The same model offered other facilities, as it permits an occasional alteration of measure, which, in some degree, authorises the change of rhythm in the text. The machinery, also, adopted from popular belief, would have seemed puerile in a Poem which did not partake of the rudeness of the old Ballad, or Metrical Romance.

For these reasons, the Poem was put into the mouth of an ancient Minstrel, the last of the race, who, as he is supposed to have survived the Revolution, might have caught somewhat of the refinement of modern poetry, without losing the simplicity of his original model. The date of the Tale itself is about the middle of the sixteenth century, when most of the personages actually flourished. The time occupied by the action is Three Nights and Three Days

INTRODUCTION TO EDITION 1830.

A POEM of nearly thirty years' standing may be supposed hardly to need an Introduction, since, without one, it has been able to keep itself afloat through the best part of a generation. Nevertheless, as, in the edition of the Waverley Novels now in course of publication, [1830,] I have imposed on myself the task of saying something concerning the purpose and history of each, in their turn, I am desirous that the Poems for which I first received some marks of the public favour, should also be accompanied with such scraps of their literary history as may be supposed to carry interest along with them. Even if I should be mistaken in thinking that the secret history of what was once so popular, may still attract public attention and curiosity, it seems to me not without its use to record the manner and circumstances under which the present, and other Poems on the same plan, attained for a season an extensive reputation.

I must resume the story of my literary labours at the period at which I broke off in the Essay on the Imitation of Popular Poetry, when I had enjoyed the first gleam of public favour, by the success of the first edition of the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*. The second edition of that work, published in 1803, proved, in the language of the trade, rather a heavy concern. The demand in Scotland had been supplied by the first edition, and the curiosity of the English was not much awakened by poems in the rude garb of antiquity, accompanied with notes referring to the obscure feuds of barbarous clans, of whose very names civilized history was ignorant. It was, on the whole, one of those books which are more praised than they are read.

At this time I stood personally in a different position from that which I occupied when I first dipt my desperate pen in ink for other purposes than those of my profession. In 1796, when I first published the *Translations from Burger*, I was an insulated individual, with only my own wants to provide for, and having, in a great measure, my own inclinations alone to consult. In 1803, when the second edition of the *Minstrelsy* appeared, I had arrived at a period of life when men, however thoughtless, encounter duties and circumstances which press consideration

and plans of life upon the most careless minds. I had been for some time married—was the father of a rising family—and, though fully enabled to meet the consequent demands upon me, it was my duty and desire to place myself in a situation which would enable me to make honourable provision against the various contingencies of life.

It may be readily supposed that the attempts which I had made in literature had been unfavourable to my success at the Bar. The goddess Themis is, at Edinburgh, and I suppose everywhere else, of a peculiarly jealous disposition. She will not readily consent to share her authority, and sternly demands from her votaries, not only that real duty be carefully attended to and discharged, but that a certain air of business shall be observed even in the midst of total idleness. It is prudent, if not absolutely necessary, in a young barrister, to appear completely engrossed by his profession; however destitute of employment he may in reality be, he ought to preserve, if possible, the appearance of full occupation. He should, therefore, seem perpetually engaged among his law papers, dusting them, as it were; and, as Ovid advises the fair,

“ Si nullus erit pulvis, tamen excute nullum.”^a

Perhaps such extremity of attention is more especially required, considering the great number of counsellors who are called to the Bar, and how very small a proportion of them are finally disposed, or find encouragement, to follow the law as a profession. Hence the number of deserters is so great, that the least lingering look behind occasions a young novice to be set down as one of the intending fugitives. Certain it is, that the Scottish Themis was at this time peculiarly jealous of any flirtation with the Muses, on the part of those who had ranged themselves under her banners. This was probably owing to her consciousness of the superior attractions of her rivals. Of late, however, she has relaxed in some instances in this particular—an eminent example of which has been shown in the case of my friend Mr. Jeffrey, who, after long conducting one of the most influential literary periodicals of the age, with unquestionable ability, has been, by the general consent of his brethren, recently elected to be their Dean of Faculty, or President—being the highest acknowledgment of his professional talents which they had it in their power to offer. But this is an incident much beyond the ideas of a period of thirty years' distance, when a barrister who really possessed any turn for lighter literature, was at as much pains to conceal it as if it had in reality been something to be ashamed of; and I could mention more than one instance in which literature and society have suffered much loss, that jurisprudence might be enriched.

Such, however, was not my case; for the reader will not wonder that my open interference with matters of light literature diminished my employment in the weightier matters of the law. Nor did the solicitors, upon whose choice the counsel takes rank in his profession, do me less than justice, by regarding others among my contemporaries as fitter to discharge the duty due to their clients,

^a “ If dust be none, yet brush that none away.”

than a young man who was taken up with running after ballads, whether Teutonic or National. My profession and I, therefore, came to stand nearly upon the footing which honest Slender consoled himself on having established with Mistress Anne Page; "There was no great love between us at the beginning, and it pleased Heaven to decrease it on farther acquaintance." I became sensible that the time was come when I must either buckle myself resolutely to the "toil by day, the lamp by night," renouncing all the Delilahs of my imagination, or bid adieu to the profession of the law, and hold another course.

I confess my own inclination revolted from the more severe choice, which might have been deemed by many the wiser alternative. As my transgressions had been numerous, my repentance must have been signalized by unusual sacrifices. I ought to have mentioned, that since my fourteenth or fifteenth year, my health, originally delicate, had become extremely robust. From infancy I had laboured under the infirmity of a severe lameness, but, as I believe is usually the case with men of spirit who suffer under personal inconveniences of this nature, I had, since the improvement of my health, in defiance of this incapacitating circumstance, distinguished myself by the endurance of toil on foot or horseback, having often walked thirty miles a-day, and rode upwards of a hundred, without resting. In this manner I made many pleasant journeys through parts of the country then not very accessible, gaining more amusement and instruction than I have been able to acquire since I have travelled in a more commodious manner. I practised most silvan sports also, with some success, and with great delight. But these pleasures must have been all resigned, or used with great moderation, had I determined to regain my station at the Bar. It was even doubtful whether I could, with perfect character as a jurisconsult, retain a situation in a volunteer corps of cavalry, which I then held. The threats of invasion were at this time instant and menacing; the call by Britain on her children was universal, and was answered by some, who, like myself, consulted rather their desire than their ability to bear arms. My services, however, were found useful in assisting to maintain the discipline of the corps, being the point on which their constitution rendered them most amenable to military criticism. In other respects, the squadron was a fine one, consisting chiefly of handsome men, well mounted and armed at their own expense. My attention to the corps took up a good deal of time; and while it occupied many of the happiest hours of my life, it furnished an additional reason for my reluctance again to encounter the severe course of study indispensable to success in the juridical profession.

On the other hand, my father, whose feelings might have been hurt by my quitting the Bar, had been for two or three years dead, so that I had no control to thwart my own inclination; and my income being equal to all the comforts, and some of the elegancies, of life, I was not pressed to an irksome labour by necessity, that most powerful of motives; consequently, I was the more easily seduced to choose the employment which was most agreeable to me. This was yet the easier, that in 1800 I had obtained the preferment of Sheriff of Selkirkshire, about £300 a-year in value, and

which was the more agreeable to me, as in that county I had several friends and relations. But I did not abandon the profession to which I had been educated, without certain prudential resolutions, which, at the risk of some egotism, I will here mention; not without the hope that they may be useful to young persons who may stand in circumstances similar to those in which I then stood.

In the first place, upon considering the lives and fortunes of persons who had given themselves up to literature, or to the task of pleasing the public, it seemed to me, that the circumstances which chiefly affected their happiness and character, were those from which Horace has bestowed upon authors the epithet of the Irritable Race. It requires no depth of philosophic reflection to perceive, that the petty warfare of Pope with the Dunces of his period could not have been carried on without his suffering the most acute torture, such as a man must endure from musquitoes, by whose stings he suffers agony, although he can crush them in his grasp by myriads. Nor is it necessary to call to memory the many humiliating instances in which men of the greatest genius have, to avenge some pitiful quarrel, made themselves ridiculous during their lives, to become the still more degraded objects of pity to future times.

Upon the whole, as I had no pretension to the genius of the distinguished persons who had fallen into such errors, I concluded there could be no occasion for imitating them in their mistakes, or what I considered as such; and, in adopting literary pursuits as the principal occupation of my future life, I resolved, if possible, to avoid those weaknesses of temper which seemed to have most easily beset my more celebrated predecessors.

With this view, it was my first resolution to keep as far as was in my power abreast of society, continuing to maintain my place in general company, without yielding to the very natural temptation of narrowing myself to what is called literary society. By doing so, I imagined I should escape the besetting sin of listening to language, which, from one motive or other, is apt to ascribe a very undue degree of consequence to literary pursuits, as if they were, indeed, the business, rather than the amusement, of life. The opposite course can only be compared to the injudicious conduct of one who pampers himself with cordial and luscious draughts, until he is unable to endure wholesome bitters. Like Gil Blas, therefore, I resolved to stick by the society of my *commis*, instead of seeking that of a more literary cast, and to maintain my general interest in what was going on around me, reserving the man of letters for the desk and the library.

My second resolution was a corollary from the first. I determined that, without shutting my ears to the voice of true criticism, I would pay no regard to that which assumes the form of satire. I therefore resolved to arm myself with that triple brass of Horace, of which those of my profession are seldom held deficient, against all the roving warfare of satire, parody, and sarcasm; to laugh if the jest was a good one, or, if otherwise, to let it hum and buzz itself to sleep.

It is to the observance of these rules, (according to my best belief,) that, after a life of thirty years engaged in literary labours of various kinds, I attribute my never having been entangled in

any literary quarrel or controversy; and, which is a still more pleasing result, that I have been distinguished by the personal friendship of my most approved contemporaries of all parties.

I adopted, at the same time, another resolution, on which it may doubtless be remarked, that it was well for me that I had it in my power to do so, and that, therefore, it is a line of conduct which, depending upon accident, can be less generally applicable in other cases. Yet I fail not to record this part of my plan, convinced that, though it may not be in every one's power to adopt exactly the same resolution, he may nevertheless, by his own exertions, in some shape or other, attain the object on which it was founded, namely, to secure the means of subsistence, without relying exclusively on literary talents. In this respect, I determined that literature should be my staff, but not my crutch, and that the profits of my literary labour, however convenient otherwise, should not, if I could help it, become necessary to my ordinary expenses. With this purpose I resolved, if the interest of my friends could so far favour me, to retire upon any of the respectable offices of the law, in which persons of that profession are glad to take refuge, when they feel themselves, or are judged by others, incompetent to aspire to its higher honours. Upon such a post an author might hope to retreat, without any perceptible alteration of circumstances, whenever the time should arrive that the public grew weary of his endeavours to please, or he himself should tire of the pen. At this period of my life, I possessed so many friends capable of assisting me in this object of ambition, that I could hardly overrate my own prospects of obtaining the preferment to which I limited my wishes; and, in fact, I obtained in no long period the reversion of a situation which completely met them.

Thus far all was well, and the Author had been guilty, perhaps, of no great imprudence, when he relinquished his forensic practice with the hope of making some figure in the field of literature. But an established character with the public, in my new capacity, still remained to be acquired. I have noticed, that the translations from Burger had been unsuccessful, nor had the original poetry which appeared under the auspices of Mr. Lewis, in the "Tales of Wonder," in any great degree raised my reputation. It is true, I had private friends disposed to second me in my efforts to obtain popularity. But I was sportsman enough to know, that if the greyhound does not run well, the halloo of his patrons will obtain nothing for him.

Neither was I ignorant that the practice of ballad-writing was for the present out of fashion, and that any attempt to revive it, or to found a poetical character upon it, would certainly fail of success. The ballad measure itself, which was once listened to as to an enchanting melody, had become hackneyed and sickening, from its being the accompaniment of every grinding hand-organ; and besides, a long work in quatrains, whether those of the common ballad, or such as are termed elegiac, has an effect upon the mind like that of the bed of Procrustes upon the human body; for, as it must be both awkward and difficult to carry on a long sentence from one stanza to another, it follows, that the meaning of each period must be comprehended within four lines, and equally

so that it must be extended so as to fill that space. The alternate dilation and contraction thus rendered necessary is singularly unfavourable to narrative composition; and the "Gondibert" of Sir William D'Avenant, though containing many striking passages, has never become popular, owing chiefly to its being told in this species of elegiac verse.

In the dilemma occasioned by this objection, the idea occurred to the Author of using the measured short line, which forms the structure of so much minstrel poetry, that it may be properly termed the Romantic stanza, by way of distinction; and which appears so natural to our language, that the very best of our poets have not been able to protract it into the verse properly called Heroic, without the use of epithets which are, to say the least, unnecessary. But, on the other hand, the extreme facility of the short couplet, which seems congenial to our language, and was, doubtless for that reason, so popular with our old minstrels, is, for the same reason, apt to prove a snare to the composer who uses it in more modern days, by encouraging him in a habit of slovenly composition. The necessity of occasional pauses often forces the young poet to pay more attention to sense, as the boy's kite rises highest when the train is loaded by a due counterpoise. The Author was therefore intimidated by what Byron calls the "fatal facility" of the octo-syllabic verse, which was otherwise better adapted to his purpose of imitating the more ancient poetry.

I was not less at a loss for a subject which might admit of being treated with the simplicity and wildness of the ancient ballad. But accident dictated both a theme and measure, which decided the subject, as well as the structure of the poem.

The lovely young Countess of Dalkeith, afterwards Harriet, Duchess of Buccleuch, had come to the land of her husband with the desire of making herself acquainted with its traditions and customs, as well as its manners and history. All who remember this lady will agree, that the intellectual character of her extreme beauty, the amenity and courtesy of her manners, the soundness of her understanding, and her unbounded benevolence, gave more the idea of an angelic visitant, than of a being belonging to this nether world; and such a thought was but too consistent with the short space she was permitted to tarry among us. Of course, where all made it a pride and pleasure to gratify her wishes, she soon heard enough of Border lore; among others, an aged gentleman of property,^a near Langholm, communicated to her ladyship the story of Gilpin Horner, a tradition in which the narrator, and many more of that country, were firm believers. The young

^a This was Mr. Beattie of Mickledale, a man then considerably upwards of eighty, of a shrewd and sarcastic temper, which he did not at all times suppress, as the following anecdote will show:—A worthy clergyman, now deceased, with better good-will than tact, was endeavouring to push the senior forward in his recollection of Border ballads and legends, by expressing reiterated surprise at his wonderful memory. "No, sir," said old Mickledale; "my memory is good for little, for it cannot retain what ought to be preserved. I can remember all these stories about the auld riding days, which are of no earthly importance; but were you, reverend sir, to repeat your best sermon in this drawing-room, I could not tell you half an hour afterwards what you had been speaking about."

Countess, much delighted with the legend, and the gravity and full confidence with which it was told, enjoined on me as a task to compose a ballad on the subject. Of course, to hear was to obey; and thus the goblin story, objected to by several critics as an excrescence upon the poem, was, in fact, the occasion of its being written.

A chance similar to that which dictated the subject, gave me also the hint of a new mode of treating it. We had at that time the lease of a pleasant cottage, near Lasswade, on the romantic banks of the Esk, to which we escaped when the vacations of the Court permitted me so much leisure. Here I had the pleasure to receive a visit from Mr. Stoddart, (now Sir John Stoddart, Judge-Advocate at Malta,) who was at that time collecting the particulars which he afterwards embodied in his *Remarks on Local Scenery in Scotland*. I was of some use to him in procuring the information which he desired, and guiding him to the scenes which he wished to see. In return, he made me better acquainted than I had hitherto been with the poetic effusions which have since made the lakes of Westmoreland, and the authors by whom they have been sung, so famous wherever the English tongue is spoken.

I was already acquainted with the "Joan of Arc," the "Thalaba," and the "Metrical Ballads" of Mr. Southey, which had found their way to Scotland, and were generally admired. But Mr. Stoddart, who had the advantage of personal friendship with the authors, and who possessed a strong memory, with an excellent taste, was able to repeat to me many long specimens of their poetry, which had not yet appeared in print. Amongst others, was the striking fragment called *Christabel*, by Mr. Coleridge, which, from the singularly irregular structure of the stanzas, and the liberty which it allowed the author to adapt the sound to the sense, seemed to be exactly suited to such an extravaganza as I meditated on the subject of Gilpin Horner. As applied to comic and humorous poetry, this *mescolanza* of measures had been already used by Anthony Hall, Anstey, Dr. Wolcott, and others; but it was in *Christabel* that I first found it used in serious poetry, and it is to Mr. Coleridge that I am bound to make the acknowledgment due from the pupil to his master. I observe that Lord Byron, in noticing my obligations to Mr. Coleridge, which I have been always most ready to acknowledge, expressed, or was understood to express, a hope that I did not write an unfriendly review on Mr. Coleridge's productions. On this subject I have only to say, that I do not even know the review which is alluded to; and were I ever to take the unbecoming freedom of censuring a man of Mr. Coleridge's extraordinary talents, it would be on account of the caprice and indolence with which he has thrown from him, as if in mere wantonness, those unfinished scraps of poetry, which, like the Torso of antiquity, defy the skill of his poetical brethren to complete them. The charming fragments which the author abandons to their fate, are surely too valuable to be treated like the proofs of careless engravers, the sweepings of whose studios often make the fortune of some painstaking collector.

I did not immediately proceed upon my projected labour, though I was now furnished with a subject, and with a structure

of verse which might have the effect of novelty to the public ear and afford the author an opportunity of varying his measure with the variations of a romantic theme. On the contrary, it was, to the best of my recollection, more than a year after Mr. Stoddart's visit, that, by way of experiment, I composed the first two or three stanzas of "The Lay of the Last Minstrel." I was shortly afterwards visited by two intimate friends, one of whom still survives. They were men whose talents might have raised them to the highest station in literature, had they not preferred exerting them in their own profession of the law, in which they attained equal preferment. I was in the habit of consulting them on my attempts at composition, having equal confidence in their sound taste and friendly sincerity." In this specimen I had, in the phrase of the Highland servant, packed all that was my own *at least*, for I had also included a line of invocation, a little softened, from Coleridge—

"Mary, mother, shield us well."

As neither of my friends said much to me on the subject of the stanzas I showed them before their departure, I had no doubt that their disgust had been greater than their good-nature chose to express. Looking upon them, therefore, as a failure, I threw the manuscript into the fire, and thought as little more as I could of the matter. Some time afterwards I met one of my two counsellors, who enquired with considerable appearance of interest, about the progress of the romance I had commenced, and was greatly surprised at learning its fate. He confessed that neither he nor our mutual friend had been at first able to give a precise opinion on a poem so much out of the common road; but that as they walked home together to the city, they had talked much on the subject, and the result was an earnest desire that I would proceed with the composition. He also added, that some sort of prologue might be necessary, to place the mind of the hearers in the situation to understand and enjoy the poem, and recommended the adoption of such quaint mottoes as Spenser has used to announce the contents of the chapters of the Faery Queen, such as—

"Babe's bloody hands may not be cleansed.
The face of golden Mean:
Her sisters two, Extremities,
Strive her to banish clean."

I entirely agreed with my friendly critic in the necessity of having some sort of pitch-pipe, which might make readers aware of the object, or rather the tone, of the publication. But I doubted whether, in assuming the oracular style of Spenser's mottoes, the interpreter might not be censured as the harder to be understood of the two. I therefore introduced the Old Minstrel, as an appropriate prolocutor, by whom the Lay might be sung or spoken, and the introduction of whom betwixt the cantos might remind

"One of these, William Erskine, Esq. (Lord Kinnedder,) I have often had occasion to mention, and though I may hardly be thanked for disclosing the name of the other, yet I cannot but state that the second is George Cranston, Esq., now a Senator of the College of Justice, by the title of Lord Corchouse. 1831. [Mr. Cranston resigned his seat on the bench in 1839]

the reader at intervals, of the time, place, and circumstances of the recitation. This species of *cadre*, or frame, afterwards afforded the poem its name of "The Lay of the Last Minstrel."

The work was subsequently shown to other friends during its progress, and received the *imprimatur* of Mr. Francis Jeffrey, who had been already for sometime distinguished by his critical talent.

The poem, being once licensed by the critics as fit for the market, was soon finished, proceeding at about the rate of a canto per week. There was, indeed, little occasion for pause or hesitation, when a troublesome rhyme might be accommodated by an alteration of the stanza, or where an incorrect measure might be remedied by a variation of the rhyme. It was finally published in 1805, and may be regarded as the first work in which the writer, who has been since so voluminous, laid his claim to be considered as an original author.

The book was published by Longman and Company, and Archibald Constable and Company. The principal of the latter firm was then commencing that course of bold and liberal industry which was of so much advantage to his country, and might have been so to himself, but for causes which it is needless to enter into here. The work, brought out on the usual terms of division of profits between the author and publishers, was not long after purchased by them for £500, to which Messrs. Longman and Company afterwards added £100, in their own unsolicited kindness, in consequence of the uncommon success of the work. It was handsomely given to supply the loss of a fine horse, which broke down suddenly while the author was riding with one of the worthy publishers.

It would be great affectation not to own frankly, that the author expected some success from "The Lay of the Last Minstrel." The attempt to return to a more simple and natural style of poetry was likely to be welcomed, at a time when the public had become tired of heroic hexameters, with all the buckram and binding which belong to them of later days. But whatever might have been his expectations, whether moderate or unreasonable, the result left them far behind, for among those who smiled on the adventurous Minstrel, were numbered the great names of William Pitt and Charles Fox.^a Neither was the extent of the sale inferior to the character of the judges who received the poem with approbation. Upwards of thirty thousand copies of the Lay were disposed of by the trade; and the author had to perform a task difficult to human vanity, when called upon to make the

^a Through what channel or in what terms Fox made known his opinion of the Lay, I have failed to ascertain. Pitt's praise, as expressed to his niece, Lady Hester Stanhope, within a few weeks after the poem appeared, was repeated by her to Mr. William Stewart Rose, who, of course communicated it forthwith to the author; and not long after, the Minister, in conversation with Scott's early friend, the Right Honourable William Dundas, signified that it would give him pleasure to find some opportunity of advancing the fortunes of such a writer. "I remember," writes this gentleman, "at Mr. Pitt's table in 1805, the Chancellor asked me about you and your then situation, and after I had answered him, Mr. Pitt observed—'He can't remain as he is,' and desired me to 'look to it.'"—LOCKHART. *Life of Scott*, Vol. II. p. 226.

necessary deductions from his own merits, in a calm attempt to account for his popularity.

A few additional remarks on the author's literary attempts after this period will be found in the Introduction to the Poem of Marmion.

ABBOTSFORD, April 1830.

INTRODUCTION.

THE way was long, the wind was cold,
 The Minstrel was infirm and old;
 His wither'd cheek, and tresses grey,
 Seem'd to have known a better day;
 The harp, his sole remaining joy,
 Was carried by an orphan boy.
 The last of all the Bards was he,
 Who sung of Border chivalry;
 For, welladay! their date was fled,
 His tuneful brethren all were dead;
 And he, neglected and oppress'd,
 Wish'd to be with them, and at rest.
 No more on prancing palfrey borne,
 He caroll'd light as lark at morn;
 No longer courted and caress'd,
 High placed in hall, a welcome guest,
 He pour'd, to lord and lady gay,
 The unpremeditated lay:
 Old times were changed, old manners gone;
 A stranger fill'd the Stuarts' throne;
 The bigots of the iron time
 Had call'd his harmless art a crime.
 A wandering Harper, scorn'd and poor,
 He begg'd his bread from door to door.
 And tun'd, to please a peasant's ear,
 The harp, a king had loved to hear.



He pass'd where Newark's stately tower
 Looks out from Yarrow's birchen bower;
 The Minstrel gazed with wishful eye—
 No humbler resting-place was nigh;
 With hesitating step at last,
 The embattled portal arch he pass'd,
 Whose ponderous grate and massy bar
 Had oft roll'd back the tide of war,
 But never closed the iron door
 Against the desolate and poor.
 The Duchess^a mark'd his weary pace.
 His timid mien, and reverend face,

^a Anne, Duchess of Buccleuch and Monmouth, representative of the ancient Lords of Buccleuch, and widow of the unfortunate James, Duke of Monmouth, who was beheaded in 1685.

And bade her page the menials tell
 That they should tend the old man well :
 For she had known adversity,
 Though born in such a high degree ;
 In pride of power, in beauty's bloom,
 Had wept o'er Monmouth's bloody tomb

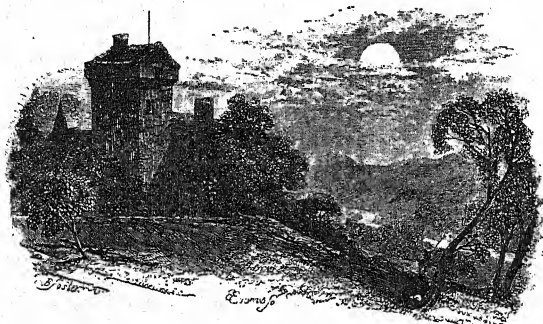
When kindness had his wants supplied,
 And the old man was gratified,
 Began to rise his minstrel pride ;
 And he began to talk anon,
 Of good Earl Francis, dead and gone,
 And of Earl Walter, rest him, God !
 A braver ne'er to battle rode ;
 And how full many a tale he knew,
 Of the old warriors of Buccleuch :
 And, would the noble Duchess deign
 To listen to an old man's strain,
 Though stiff his hand, his voice though weak,
 He thought even yet, the sooth to speak,
 That, if she loved the harp to hear,
 He could make music to her ear.

The humble boon was soon obtain'd ;
 The Aged Minstrel audience gain'd.
 But, when he reach'd the room of state,
 Where she, with all her ladies, sate,
 Perchance he wish'd his boon denied :
 For, when to tune his harp he tried,
 His trembling hand had lost the ease,
 Which marks security to please ;
 And scenes, long past, of joy and pain,
 Came wildering o'er his aged brain—
 He tried to tune his harp in vain !
 The pitying Duchess praised its chime,
 And gave him heart, and gave him time,
 Till every string's according glee
 Was blended into harmony.
 And then, he said, he would full fain
 He could recall an ancient strain,
 He never thought to sing again.
 It was not framed for village churls,
 But for high dames and mighty earls ;
 He had play'd it to King Charles the good,
 When he kept court in Holyrood ;
 And much he wish'd, yet fear'd, to try
 The long-forgotten melody.
 Amid the strings his finger stray'd,
 And an uncertain warbling made,
 And oft he shook his hoary head.
 But when he caught the measure wild,
 The old man raised his face, and smiled ;
 And lighten'd up his faded eye,
 With all a poet's ecstasy !
 In varying cadence, soft or strong,

He swept the sounding chords along :
The present scene, the future lot,
His toils, his wants, were all forgot :
Cold diffidence, and age's frost,
In the full tide of song were lost ;
Each blank in faithless memory void,
The poet's glowing thought supplied ;
And, while his harp responsive rung,
'Twas thus the LATEST MINSTREL sung.



'WHY WATCH THESE WARRIORS, ARM'D, BY NIGHT?'



OLD TOWER OF BRANKSOME.

CANTO FIRST.

I.

THE feast was over in Branksome tower.¹
 And the Ladye had gone to her secret bower ;
 Her bower that was guarded by word and by spell,
 Deadly to hear, and deadly to tell—
 Jesu Maria, shield us well !
 No living wight, save the Ladye alone,
 Had dared to cross the threshold stone.

II.

The tables were drawn, it was idlesse all ;
 Knight, and page, and household squire,
 Loiter'd through the lofty hall,
 Or crowded round the ample fire :
 The stag-hounds, weary with the chase,
 Lay stretch'd upon the rushy floor,
 And urged, in dreams, the forest race,
 From Teviot-stone to Eskdale-moor.

III.

Nine-and-twenty knights of fame
 Hung their shields in Branksome-Hall ;²
 Nine-and-twenty squires of name
 Brought them their steeds to bower from stall ;
 Nine-and-twenty yeomen tall
 Waited, duteous, on them all :
 They were all knights of mettle true,
 Kinsmen to the bold Buccleuch.

¹ See Note 1 of the "NOTES TO THE LAY OF THE LAST MINSTREL" in the Appendix. The figures of reference throughout the poem relate to further Notes in the Appendix.

IV.

Ten of them were sheathed in steel,
 With belted sword, and spur on heel:
 They quitted not their harness bright,
 Neither by day, nor yet by night:
 They lay down to rest,
 With corslet laced,
 Pillow'd on buckler cold and hard;
 They carv'd at the meal
 With gloves of steel,
 And they drank the red wine through the helmet
 barr'd.

V.

Ten squires, ten yeomen, mail-clad men,
 Waited the beck of the warders ten;
 Thirty steeds, both fleet and wight,
 Stood saddled in stable day and night,
 Barbed with frontlet of steel, I trow,
 And with Jedwood-axe at saddle-bow;³
 A hundred more fed free in stall:—
 Such was the custom of Branksome Hall.

VI.

Why do these steeds stand ready dight?
 Why watch these warriors, arm'd, by night?—
 They watch, to hear the blood-hound baying:
 They watch, to hear the war-horn braying;
 To see St George's red cross streaming,
 To see the midnight beacon gleaming:
 They watch, against Southern force and guile,
 Lest Scroop, or Howard, or Percy's powers,
 Threaten Branksome's lordly towers,
 From Warkworth, or Naworth, or merry Carlisle.⁴

VII.

Such is the custom of Branksome Hall.—
 Many a valiant knight is here;
 But he, the chieftain of them all,
 His sword hangs rusting on the wall,
 Beside his broken spear.
 Bards long shall tell,
 How Lord Walter fell!⁵
 When startled burghers fled, afar,
 The furies of the Border war;
 When the streets of high Dunedin^a
 Saw lances gleam, and falchions redden,
 And heard the slogan's^b deadly yell—
 Then the Chief of Branksome fell.

VIII.

Can piety the discord heal,
 Or staunch the death-feud's enmity?

^a Edinburgh.^b The war-cry or gathering word of a Border clan.

Can Christian lore, can patriot zeal,
 Can love of blessed charity?
 No! vainly to each holy shrine,
 In mutual pilgrimage, they drew;
 Implored, in vain, the grace divine
 For chiefs, their own red falchions slew:
 While Cessford owns the rule of Carr,
 While Ettrick boasts the line of Scott,⁶
 The slaughter'd chiefs, the mortal jar,
 The havoc of the feudal war,
 Shall never, never be forgot!

IX.

In sorrow o'er Lord Walter's bier
 The warlike foresters had bent;
 And many a flower, and many a tear,
 Old Teviot's maids and matrons lent:
 But o'er her warrior's bloody bier
 The Ladye dropp'd nor flower nor tear!
 Vengeance deep-brooding o'er the slain,
 Had lock'd the source of softer woe;
 And burning pride, and high disdain,
 Forbade the rising tear to flow;
 Until, amid his sorrowing clan,
 Her son lisp'd from the nurse's knee--
 "And if I live to be a man,
 My father's death revenged shall be!"
 Then fast the mother's tears did seek
 To dew the infant's kindling cheek.

X.

All loose her negligent attire,
 All loose her golden hair,
 Hung Margaret o'er her slaughter'd sire,
 And wept in wild despair,
 But not alone the bitter tear
 Had filial grief supplied;
 For hopeless love, and anxious fear,
 Had lent their mingled tide:
 Nor in her mother's alter'd eye
 Dared she to look for sympathy.
 Her lover, 'gainst her father's clan,
 With Carr in arms had stood,
 When Mathouse-burn to Melrose ran,
 All purple with their blood;
 And well she knew, her mother dread,
 Before Lord Cranstoun she should wed,
 Would see her on her dying bed.

XI.

Of noble race the Ladye came,
 Her father was a clerk of fame,
 Of Bethune's line of Picardie:
 He learned the art that none may name,
 In Padua, far beyond the sea.⁷

Men said, he changed his mortal frame,
By feat of magic mystery;
For when in studious mood he paced
St Andrew's cloister'd hall,
His form no darkening shadow traced
Upon the sunny wall!

XII.

And of his skill, as bards avow,
He taught that Ladye fair,
Till to her bidding she could bow
The viewless forms of air.
And now she sits in secret bower,
In old Lord David's western tower,
And listens to a heavy sound,
That moans the mossy turrets round.
Is it the roar of Teviot's tide,
That chafes against the scaur's red side?
Is it the wind that swings the oaks?
Is it the echo from the rocks?
What may it be, the heavy sound,
That moans old Branksome's turrets round?

XIII.

At the sullen, moaning sound,
The ban-dogs bay and howl;
And from the turrets round,
Loud whoops the startled owl.
In the hall, both squire and knight
Swore that a storm was near,
And looked forth to view the night;
But the night was still and clear?

XIV.

From the sound of Teviot's tide,
Chafing with the mountain's side,
From the groan of the wind-swung oak,
From the sullen echo of the rock,
From the voice of the coming storm,
The Ladye knew it well!
It was the Spirit of the Flood that spoke,
And he called on the Spirit of the Fell

XV.

RIVER SPIRIT.

"Sleep'st thou brother?"—

MOUNTAIN SPIRIT.

—"Brother, nay—

On my hills the moonbeams play.
From Craik-cross to Skelfhill pen,
By every rill, in every glen,
Merry elves their morris pacing,
To ærial minstrelsy,

Emerald rings on brown heath tracing,
 Trip it deft and merrily.
 Up, and mark their nimble feet!
 Up, and list their music sweet!"

XVI.

RIVER SPIRIT.

"Tears of an imprison'd maiden
 Mix with my polluted stream;
 Margaret of Branksome, sorrow-laden,
 Mourns beneath the moon's pale beam.
 Tell me, thou, who view'st the stars,
 When shall cease these feudal jars?
 What shall be the maiden's fate?
 Who shall be the maiden's mate?"

XVII.

MOUNTAIN SPIRIT.

"Arthur's slow wain his course doth roll,
 In utter darkness, round the pole;
 The Northern Bear lowers black and grim;
 Orion's studded belt is dim;
 Twinkling faint, and distant far,
 Shimmers through mist each planet star;
 Ill may I read their high decree!
 But no kind influence deign they shower
 On Tviot's tide, and Branksome's tower,
 Till pride be quell'd, and love be free."

XVIII.

The unearthly voices ceast,
 And the heavy sound was still;
 It died on the river's breast,
 It died on the side of the hill.
 But round Lord David's tower
 The sound still floated near;
 For it rung in the Ladye's bower,
 And it rung in the Ladye's ear.
 She raised her stately head,
 And her heart throbb'd high with pride:—
 "Your mountains shall bend,
 And your streams ascend,
 Ere Margaret be our foeman's bride!"

XIX.

The Ladye sought the lofty hall,
 Where many a bold retainer lay,
 And, with jocund din, among them all,
 Her son pursued his infant play.
 A fancied moss-trooper, the boy
 The truncheon of a spear bestrode,
 And round the hall right merrily,
 In mimic foray rode.
 Even bearded knights, in arms grown old,
 Share in his frolic gambols bore,

Albeit their hearts, of rugged mould,
Were stubborn as the steel they wore.
For the grey warriors prophesied,
How the brave boy, in future war,
Should tame the unicorn's pride,
Exalt the Crescent and the Star.

XX.

The Lady forgot her purpose high,
One moment, and no more ;
One moment gazed with a mother's eye,
As she paused at the arched door :
Then, from amid the armed train,
She call'd to her William of Deloraine.

XXI.

A stark moss-trooping Scott was he,
As e'er couch'd Border lance by knee ;
Through Solway sands, through Tarras moss,
Blindfold, he knew the paths to cross ;
By wily turns, by desperate bounds,
Had baffled Percy's best blood-hounds ;⁹
In Eske or Liddel, fords were none,
But he would ride them, one by one ;
Alike to him was time or tide,
December's snow, or July's pride ;
Alike to him was tide or time,
Moonless midnight, or matin prime :
Steady of heart, and stout of hand,
As ever drove prey from Cumberland ;
Five times outlawed had he been,
By England's King, and Scotland's Queen.

XXII.

" Sir William of Deloraine, good at need,
Mount thee on the wightest steed ;
Spare not to spur, nor stint to ride,
Until thou come to fair Tweedside ;
And in Melrose's holy pile
Seek thou the Monk of St Mary's aisle.
Greet the Father well from me ;
Say that the fated hour is come,
And to-night he shall watch with thee,
To win the treasure of the tomb :
For this will be St Michael's night,
And, though stars be dim, the moon is bright ;
And the Cross, of bloody red,
Will point to the grave of the mighty dead.

XXIII.

" What he gives thee, see thou keep ;
Stay not thou for food or sleep :
Be it scroll, or be it book,
Into it, Knight, thou must not look ;
If thou readest, thou art lorn !
Better hadst thou ne'er been born !" —

XXIV.

"O swiftly can speed my dapple-grey steed,
Which drinks of the Teviot clear;
Ere break of day," the Warrior 'gan say,
"Again will I be here:
And safer by none may thy errand be done,
Than, noble dame, by me;
Letter nor line know I never a one,
Wer't my neck-verse at Hairibee."

XXV.

Soon in his saddle sate he fast,
And soon the steep descent he past,
Soon cross'd the sounding barbican,^a
And soon the Teviot side he won.
Eastward the wooded path he rode,
Green hazels o'er his basnet nod;
He pass'd the Peel^b of Goldiland,
And cross'd old Borthwick's roaring strand
Dimly he viewed the Moat-hill's mound,
Where Druid shades still fitted round;
In Hawick twinkled many a light;
Behind him soon they set in night;
And soon he spurr'd his courser keen
Beneath the tower of Hazeldean.

XXVI.

The clattering hoofs the watchmen mark;—
"Stand, ho! thou courier of the dark."—
"For Branksome, ho!" the knight rejoind'd,
And left the friendly tower behind.
He turn'd him now from Teviotside,
And, guided by the tinkling rill,
Northward the dark ascent did ride,
And gained the moor at Horsliehill;
Broad on the left before him lay,
For many a mile, the Roman way.^c

XXVII.

A moment now he slack'd his speed,
A moment breathed his panting steed;
Drew saddle-girth and corslet-band,
And loosen'd in the sheath his brand.
On Minto-crag the moonbeams glint,
Where Barnhill hew'd his bed of flint;
Who flung his outlaw'd limbs to rest,
Where falcons hang their giddy nest,
Mid cliffs, from whence his eagle eye
For many a league his prey could spy
Cliffs, doubling, on their echoes borne,
The terrors of the robber's horn;

^a *Barbican*, the defence of an outer gate of a feudal castle

^b *Peel*, a Border tower.

^c An ancient Roman road, crossing through part of Roxburghshire.

Cliffs, which, for many a later year,
The warbling Doric reed shall hear,
When some sad swain shall teach the grove,
Ambition is no cure for love!

XXVIII.

Unchallenged, thence pass'd Deloraine,
To ancient Riddel's fair domain,
Where Aill, from mountains freed,
Down from the lakes did raving come;
Each wave was crested with tawny foam,
Like the mane of a chestnut steed.
In vain! no torrent, deep or broad,
Might bar the bold moss-trooper's road.

XXIX.

At the first plunge the horse sunk low,
And the water broke o'er the saddlebow;
Above the foaming tide, I ween,
Scarce half the charger's neck was seen;
For he was barded^a from counter to tail,
And the rider was armed complete in mail;
Never heavier man and horse
Stemm'd a midnight torrent's force.
The warrior's very plume, I say,
Was daggled by the dashing spray;
Yet, through good heart, and Our Ladye's grace,
At length he gain'd the landing place.

XXX.

Now Bowden Moor the march-man won,
And sternly shook his plumed head,
As glanced his eye o'er Halidon;^b
For on his soul the slaughter red
Of that unhallow'd morn arose,
When first the Scott and Carr were foes
When royal James beheld the fray,
Prize to the victor of the day,
When Home and Douglas, in the van,
Bore down Buccleuch's retiring clan,
Till gallant Cessford's heart-blood dear
Reek'd on dark Elliot's Border spear.

XXXI.

In bitter mood ne spurred fast,
And soon the hated heath was past;
And far beneath, in lustre wan,
Old Melros' rose, and fair Tweed ran,
Like some tall rock with lichens grey.
Seem'd dimly huge, the dark Abbaye.
When Hawick he pass'd, had curfew rung,
Now midnight lauds^c were in Melrose sung.

^a *Barded*, or *barbed*,—applied to a horse accoutred with defensive armour.

^b An ancient seat of the Kerrs of Cessford, now demolished.

^c *Lauds*, the midnight service of the Catholic Church.

The sound, upon the fitful gale,
 In solemn wise did rise and fall,
 Like that wild harp, whose magic tone
 Is waken'd by the winds alone.
 But when Melrose he reach'd, 'twas silence all;
 He meetly stabled his steed in stall,
 And sought the convent's lonely wall.¹⁰

Here paused the harp; and with its swell
 The Master's fire and courage fell;
 Dejectedly, and low, he bow'd,
 And, gazing timid on the crowd,
 He seem'd to seek, in every eye,
 If they approved his minstrelsy;
 And, diffident of present praise,
 Somewhat he spoke of former days,
 And how old age, and wand'ring long,
 Had done his hand and harp some wrong
 The Duchess, and her daughters fair,
 And every gentle lady there
 Each after each, in due degree,
 Gave praises to his melody;
 His hand was true, his voice was clear,
 And much they longed the rest to hear,
 Encouraged thus, the Aged Man,
 After meet rest, again began.

CANTO SECOND.

I.

If thou wouldst view fair Melrose aright,
 Go visit it by the pale moonlight;
 For the gay beams of lightsome day,
 Gild, but to flout, the ruins grey.
 When the broken arches are black in night,
 And each shafted oriel glimmers white;
 When the cold light's uncertain shower
 Streams on the ruined central tower;
 When buttress and buttress, alternately,
 Seem framed of ebony and ivory;
 When silver edges the imagery,
 And the scrolls that teach thee to live and die;
 When distant Tweed is heard to rave,
 And the owl to hoot o'er the dead man's grave,
 Then go—but go alone the while—
 Then view St David's ruin'd pile;¹¹
 And, home returning, soothly swear,
 Was never scene so sad and fair!

II.

Short halt did Deloraine make there;
 Little reck'd he of the scene so fair;
 With dagger's hilt, on the wicket strong,
 He struck full loud, and struck full long.
 The porter hurried to the gate—
 "Who knocks so loud, and knocks so late?"
 "From Branksome I," the warrior cried;
 And straight the wicket open'd wide:
 For Branksome's Chiefs had in battle stood,
 To fence the rights of fair Melrose;
 And lands and livings, many a rood,
 Had gifted the shrine for their souls' repose.

III.

Bold Deloraine his errand said;
 The porter bent his humble head;
 With torch in hand, and feet unshod,
 And noiseless step, the path he trod;
 The arched cloister, far and wide,
 Rang to the warrior's clanking stride,
 Till, stooping low his lofty crest,
 He enter'd the cell of the ancient priest,
 And lifted his barred aventayle,^a
 To hail the Monk of St Mary's aisle.

IV.

"The Ladye of Branksome greets thee by me;
 Says, that the fated hour is come,
 And that to-night I shall watch with thee,
 To win the treasure of the tomb."
 From sackcloth couch the monk arose,
 With toil his stiffen'd limbs he rear'd;
 A hundred years had flung their snows
 On his thin locks and floating beard.

V.

And strangely on the knight look'd he,
 And his blue eyes gleam'd wild and wide
 "And darest thou, Warrior! seek to see
 What heaven and hell alike would hide?
 My breast, in belt of iron pent,
 With shirt of hair and scourge of thorn;
 For threescore years, in penance spent,
 My knees those flinty stones have worn;
 Yet all too little to atone
 For knowing what should ne'er be known.
 Would'st thou thy every future year
 In ceaseless prayer and penance dree,
 Yet wait thy latter end with fear—
 Then, daring Warrior, follow me!"

VI.

"Penance, father, will I none;
 Prayer know I hardly one;

^a *Aventayle*, visor of the helmet.

For mass or prayer can I rarely tarry,
 Save to patter an Ave Mary,
 When I ride on a Border foray.
 Other prayer can I none;
 So speed me my errand, and let me be gone."—

VII.

Again on the Knight look'd the Churchman old,
 And again he sighed heavily;
 For he had himself been a warrior bold,
 And fought in Spain and Italy.
 And he thought on the days that were long since by,
 When his limbs were strong, and his courage was
 high:—
 Now, slow and faint, he led the way,
 Where, cloister'd round, the garden lay;
 The pillar'd arches were over their head,
 And beneath their feet were the bones of the dead.

VIII.

Spreading herbs, and flowerets bright,
 Glisten'd with the dew of night;
 Nor herb, nor floweret, glisten'd there,
 But was carved in the cloister-arches as fair.
 The Monk gazed long on the lovely moon,
 Then into the night he looked forth;
 And red and bright the streamers light
 Were dancing in the glowing north.
 So had he seen, in fair Castile,
 The youth in glittering squadrons start;
 Sudden the flying jennet wheel,
 And hurl the unexpected dart.
 He knew, by the streamers that shot so bright,
 That spirits were riding the northern light.

IX.

By a steel-clenched postern door,
 They enter'd now the chancel tall;
 The darken'd roof rose high aloof
 On pillars lofty and light and small:
 The key-stone, that lock'd each ribbed aisle,
 Was a fleur-de-lys, or a quatre-feuille;
 The corbells^a were carved grotesque and grim;
 And the pillars, with cluster'd shafts so trim,
 With base and with capital flourish'd around,
 Seem'd bundles of lances which garlands had bound.

X.

Full many a scutcheon and banner riven,
 Shook to the cold night-wind of heaven,
 Around the screened altar's pale;
 And there the dying lamps did burn,
 Before thy low and lonely urn,

^a *Corbells*, the projections from which the arches spring, usual'y cut in a fantastic face, or mask.

O gallant chief of Otterburne!¹²
 And thine, dark Knight of Liddesdale!¹³
 O fading honours of the dead!
 O high ambition, lowly laid!

XL

The moon on the east oriel shone
 Through slender shafts of shapely stone,
 By foliated tracery combined;
 Thou would'st have thought some fairy's hand
 Twixt poplars straight the ozier wand,
 In many a freakish knot, had twined;
 Then framed a spell, when the work was done,
 And changed the willow wreaths to stone.
 The silver light, so pale and faint,
 Show'd many a prophet, and many a saint,
 Whose image on the glass was dyed;
 Full in the midst, his Cross of Red
 Triumphant Michael brandished,
 And trampled the Apostate's pride.
 The moonbeam kiss'd the holy pane,
 And threw on the pavement a bloody stain.

XII.

They sate them down on a marble stone,
 (A Scottish monarch slept below;)
 Thus spoke the Monk, in solemn tone:—
 "I was not always a man of woe;
 For Paynim countries I have trod,
 And fought beneath the cross of God:
 Now, strange to my eyes thine arms appear,
 And their iron clang sounds strange to my ear.

XIII.

"In these far climes it was my lot
 To meet the wondrous Michael Scott;¹⁴
 A wizard, of such dreaded fame,
 That when, in Salamanca's cave,
 Him listed his magic wand to wave,
 The bells would ring in Notre Dame!
 Some of his skill he taught to me;
 And, Warrior, I could say to thee
 The words that cleft Eildon hills in three,¹⁵
 And bridled the Tweed with a curb of stone:
 But to speak them were a deadly sin;
 And for having but thought them my heart within
 A treble penance must be done.

XIV.

"When Michael lay on his dying bed,
 His conscience was awakened:
 He bethought him of his sinful deed,
 And he gave me a sign to come with speed.
 I was in Spain when the morning rose,
 But I stood by his bed ere evening close.

The words may not again be said,
That he spoke to me, on death-bed laid;
They would rend this Abbaye's massy nave,
And pile it in heaps above his grave.

XV.

"I swore to bury his Mighty Book,
That never mortal might therein look;
And never to tell where it was hid,
Save at his Chief of Branksome's need:
And when that need was past and o'er,
Again the volume to restore.
I buried him on St Michael's night,
When the bell toll'd one, and the moon was bright,
And I dug his chamber among the dead,
When the floor of the chancel was stained red,
That his patron's cross might over him wave,
And scare the fiends from the Wizard's grave.

XVI.

"It was a night of woe and dread,
When Michael in the tomb I laid!
Strange sounds along the chancel pass'd,
The banners waved without a blast"—
—Still spoke the Monk, when the bell toll'd one!—
I tell you, that a braver man
Than William of Deloraine, good at need,
Against a foe ne'er spurr'd a steed;
Yet somewhat was he chill'd with dread,
And his hair did bristle upon his head.

XVII.

"Lo, Warrior! now the Cross of Red
Points to the grave of the mighty dead;
Within it burns a wonderous light,
To chase the spirits that love the night.
That lamp shall burn unquenchably,
Until the eternal doom shall be."—
Slow moved the Monk to the broad flag-stone,
Which the bloody Cross was traced upon:
He pointed to a secret nook;
An iron-bar the Warrior took;
And the Monk made a sign with his wither'd
hand,
The grave's huge portal to expand.

XVIII.

With beating heart to the task he went;
His sinewy frame o'er the grave-stone bent;
With bar of iron heaved amain,
Till the toll-drops fell from his brows, like rain.
It was by dint of passing strength,
That he moved the massy stone at length.
I would you had been there, to see
How the light broke forth so gloriously

Stream'd upward to the chancel roof,
 And through the galleries far aloof!
 No earthly flame blazed e'er so bright:
 It shone like heaven's own blessed light,
 And, issuing from the tomb,
 Show'd the Monk's cowl, and visage pale,
 Danced on the dark-brow'd Warrior's mail,
 And kiss'd his waving plume.

XIX.

Before their eyes the Wizard lay,
 As if he had not been dead a day.
 His hoary beard in silver roll'd,
 He seem'd some seventy winters old;
 A palmer's amice wrapp'd him round,
 With a wrought Spanish baldric bound
 Like a pilgrim from beyond the sea:
 His left hand held his Book of Might;
 A silver cross was in his right;
 The lamp was placed beside his knee:
 High and majestic was his look,
 At which the fellest fiend had shook,
 And all unruffled was his face:
 They trusted his soul had gotten grace.

XX.

Often had William of Deloraine
 Rode through the battle's bloody plain,
 And trampled down the warriors slain,
 And neither known remorse nor awe;
 Yet now remorse and awe he own'd;
 His breath came thick, his head swam round,
 When this strange scene of death he saw,
 Bewilder'd and unnerv'd he stood,
 And the priest pray'd fervently and loud:
 With eyes averted prayed he;
 He might not endure the sight to see,
 Of the man he had loved so brotherly.

XXI.

And when the priest his death-prayer had pray'd,
 Thus unto Deloraine he said:—
 "Now, speed thee what thou hast to do,
 Or, Warrior, we may dearly rue;
 For those, thou may'st not look upon,
 Are gathering fast round the yawning stone!"
 Then, Deloraine, in terror, took
 From the cold hand the Mighty Book,
 With iron clasp'd, and with iron bound:
 He thought, as he took it, the dead man frown'd;
 But the glare of the sepulchral light,
 Perchance, had dazzled the warrior's sight.

XXII.

When the huge stone sunk o'er the tomb,
 The night return'd in double gloom:

For the moon had gone down, and the stars were few;
 And, as the Knight and Priest withdrew,
 With wavering steps and dizzy brain,
 They hardly might the postern gain.
 'Tis said, as through the aisles they pass'd,
 They heard strange noises on the blast;
 And through the cloister-galleries small,
 Which at mid-height thread the chancel wall,
 Loud sobs, and laughter louder, ran,
 And voices unlike the voice of man;
 As if the fiends kept holiday,
 Because these spells were brought to day.
 I cannot tell how the truth may be;
 I say the tale as 'twas said to me.

XXIII.

"Now, hie thee hence," the Father said,
 "And when we are on death-bed laid,
 O may our dear Ladye, and sweet St John,
 Forgive our souls for the deed we have done!"
 The Monk return'd him to his cell,
 And many a prayer and penance sped;
 When the convent met at the noontide bell—
 The Monk of St Mary's aisle was dead!
 Before the cross was the body laid,
 With hands clasp'd fast, as if still he pray'd.

XXIV.

The Knight breathed free in the morning wind,
 And strove his hardihood to find:
 He was glad when he pass'd the tombstones grey,
 Which girdle round the fair Abbaye;
 For the mystic Book, to his bosom prest,
 Felt like a load upon his breast;
 And his joints, with nerves of iron twin'd,
 Shook, like the aspen leaves in wind.
 Full fain was he when the dawn of day
 Began to brighten Cheviot grey;
 He joy'd to see the cheerful light,
 And he said Ave Mary, as well as he might.

XXV.

The sun had brighten'd Cheviot grey,
 The sun had brighten'd the Carter's^a side;
 And soon beneath the rising day
 Smiled Branksome towers and Teviot's tide.
 The wild birds told their warbling tale,
 And waken'd every flower that blows;
 And peeped forth the violet pale,
 And spread her breast the mountain rose.
 And lovelier than the rose so red,
 Yet paler than the violet pale,
 She early left her sleepless bed,
 The fairest maid of Teviotdale.

^a A mountain on the Border of England, above Jedburgh.

XXVI.

Why does fair Margaret so early awake,
And don her kirtle so hastilie;
And the silken knots, which in hurry she would make,
Why tremble her slender fingers to tie;
Why does she stop, and look often around,
As she glides down the secret stair;
And why does she pat the shaggy blood-hound,
As she rouses him up from his lair;
And, though she passes the postern alone,
Why is not the watchman's bugle blown?

XXVII.

The Ladye steps in doubt and dread,
Lest her watchful mother hear her tread;
The Ladye caresses the rough blood-hound,
Lest his voice should waken the castle round;
The watchman's bugle is not blown,
For he was her foster-father's son;
And she glides through the greenwood at dawn of light
To meet Baron Henry, her own true knight.

XXVIII.

The Knight and Ladye fair are met,
And under the hawthorn's boughs are set.
A fairer pair were never seen
To meet beneath the hawthorn green.
He was stately, and young, and tall;
Dreaded in battle, and loved in hall:
And she, when love, scarce told, scarce hid,
Lent to her cheek a livelier red;
When the half sigh her swelling breast
Against the silken ribbon prest;
When her blue eyes their secret told,
Though shaded by her locks of gold—
Where would you find the peerless fair,
With Margaret of Branksome might compare.

XXIX.

And now, fair dames, methinks I see
You listen to my minstrelsy;
Your waving locks ye backward throw,
And sidelong bend your necks of snow:
Ye ween to hear a melting tale,
Of two true lovers in a dale;
And how the Knight, with tender fire,
To paint his faithful passion strove;
Swore he might at her feet expire,
But never, never cease to love;
And how she blush'd and how she sigh'd,
And, half consenting, half denied,
And said that she would die a maid;—
Yet, might the bloody feud be stay'd,
Henry of Cranstoun, and only he,
Margaret of Branksome's choice should be.

XXX.

Alas! fair dames, your hopes are vain!
 My harp has lost the enchanting strain;
 Its lightness would my age reprove:
 My hairs are grey, my limbs are old,
 My heart is dead, my veins are cold:
 I may not, must not, sing of love.

XXXI.

Beneath an oak, moss'd o'er by eld,
 The Baron's Dwarf his courser held,¹⁶
 And held his crested helm and spear:
 That Dwarf was scarce an earthly man,
 If the tales were true that of him ran
 Through all the Border, far and near.
 'Twas said, when the Baron a-hunting rode
 Through Reedsdale's glens, but rarely trod,
 He heard a voice cry, "Lost! lost! lost!"
 And, like tennis-ball by racket toss'd,
 A leap, of thirty feet and three,
 Made from the gorse this elfin shape,
 Distorted like some dwarfish ape,
 And lighted at Lord Cranstoun's knee.
 Lord Cranstoun was some whit dismay'd;
 'Tis said that five good miles he rade,
 To rid him of his company;
 But where he rode one mile, the Dwarf ran four,
 And the Dwarf was first at the castle door.

XXXII.

Use lessens marvel, it is said:
 This elfish Dwarf with the Baron staid;
 Little he ate, and less he spoke,
 Nor mingled with the menial flock:
 And oft apart his arms he toss'd,
 And often mutter'd "Lost! lost! lost!"
 He was waspish, arch, and litherlie,
 But well Lord Cranstoun served he:
 And he of his service was full fain;
 For once he had been ta'en or slain,
 An it had not been for his ministry.
 All between Home and Hermitage,
 Talk'd of Lord Cranstoun's Goblin-Page.

XXXIII.

For the Baron went on pilgrimage,
 And took with him this elvish Page,
 To Mary's Chapel of the Lowes:
 For there, beside our Lady's lake,
 An offering he had sworn to make,
 And he would pay his vows.
 But the Ladye of Branksome gather'd a band
 Of the best that would ride at her command
 The trysting-place was Newark Lees.
 Was of Harden came thither amain,

And thither came John of Thirlestane,
 And thither came William of Deloraine;
 They were three hundred spears and three.
 Through Douglas-burn, up Yarrow stream,
 Their horses prance, their lances gleam.
 They came to St Mary's lake ere day;
 But the chapel was void, and the Baron away.
 They burn'd the chapel for very rage,
 And cursed Lord Cranstoun's Goblin-Page.

XXXIV.

And now, in Branksome's good greenwood,
 As under the aged oak he stood,
 The Baron's courser pricks his ears,
 As if a distant noise he hears.
 The Dwarf waves his long lean arm on high,
 And signs to the lovers to part and fly:
 No time was then to vow or sigh.
 Fair Margaret through the hazel grove,
 Flew like the startled cushat-dove:^a
 The Dwarf the stirrup held and rein;
 Vaulted the Knight on his steed amain,
 And, pondering deep that morning's scene,
 Rode eastward through the hawthorns green.

WHILE thus he pour'd the lengthen'd tale,
 The Minstrel's voice began to fail:
 Full slyly smiled the observant page,
 And gave the wither'd hand of age
 A goblet, crown'd with mighty wine,
 The blood of Velez' scorched vine.
 He raised the silver cup on high,
 And, while the big drop fill'd his eye,
 Pray'd God to bless the Duchess long,
 And all who cheer'd a son of song.
 The attending maidens smiled to see
 How long, how deep, how zealously,
 The precious juice the Minstrel quaff'd;
 And he, embolden'd by the draught,
 Look'd gaily back to them, and laugh'd.
 The cordial nectar of the bowl
 Swell'd his old veins, and cheer'd his soul;
 A lighter, livelier prelude ran,
 Ere thus his tale again began.

^a Wood-pigeon.

CANTO THIRD.

I.

And said I that my limbs were old,
 And said I that my blood was cold,
 And that my kindly fire was fled,
 And my poor wither'd heart was dead,
 And that I might not sing of love?—
 How could I, to the dearest theme
 That ever warm'd a minstrel's dream,
 So foul, so false a recreant prove!
 How could I name love's very name,
 Nor wake my heart to notes of flame!

II.

In peace, Love tunes the shepherd's reed;
 In war, he mounts the warrior's steed;
 In halls, in gay attire is seen;
 In hamlets, dances on the green.
 Love rules the court, the camp, the grove,
 And men below, and saints above;
 For love is heaven, and heaven is love.

III.

So thought Lord Cranstoun, as I ween,
 While, pondering deep the tender scene,
 He rode through Branksome's hawthorn green.
 But the page shouted wild and shrill,
 And scarce his helmet could he don,
 When downward from the shady hill
 A stately knight came pricking on.
 That warrior's steed, so dapple-grey,
 Was dark with sweat, and splash'd with clay;
 His armour red with many a stain:
 He seem'd in such a weary plight,
 As if he had ridden the live-long night;
 For it was William of Deloraine.

IV.

But no whit weary did he seem,
 When, dancing in the sunny beam,
 He mark'd the crane on the Baron's crest;^a
 For his ready spear was in his rest.
 Few were the words, and stern and high,
 That mark'd the foeman's feudal hate;
 For question fierce, and proud reply,
 Gave signal soon of dire debate.

^a The crest of the Cranstouns, in allusion to their name, is a crane dormant, holding a stone in his foot, with an emphatic Border motto. *Thou shalt want ere I want.*

Their very coursers seem'd to know
That each was other's mortal foe,
And snorted fire when wheel'd around,
To give each knight his vantage-ground.

V.

In rapid round the Baron bent;
He sigh'd a sigh, and pray'd a prayer;
The prayer was to his patron saint,
The sigh was to his ladye fair.
Stout Deloraine nor sighed nor pray'd,
Nor saint, nor ladye, call'd to aid;
But he stoop'd his head, and couch'd his spear,
And spur'd his steed to full career.
The meeting of these champions proud
Seem'd like the bursting thunder-cloud.

VI.

Stern was the dint the Borderer lent!
The stately Baron backwards bent;
Bent backwards to his horse's tail,
And his plumes went scattering on the gale;
The tough ash spear, so stout and true,
Into a thousand flinders flew.
But Cranstoun's lance, of more avail,
Pierced through, like silk, the Borderer's mail;
Through shield, and jack, and acorn, past,
Deep in his bosom broke at last.—
Still sate the warrior, saddle-fast,
Till, stumbling in the mortal shock,
Down went the steed, the girthing broke,
Hurl'd on a heap lay man and horse.
The Baron onward pass'd his course;
Nor knew—so giddy roll'd his brain—
His foe lay stretched upon the plain.

VII.

But when he rein'd his courser round,
And saw his foeman on the ground
Lie senseless as the bloody clay,
He bade his page to stanch the wound,
And there beside the warrior stay,
And tend him in his doubtful state,
And lead him to Branksome castle-gate.
His noble mind was inly moved
For the kinsman of the maid he loved.
This shalt thou do without delay:
No longer here myself may stay;
Unless the swifter I speed away,
Short shrift will be at my dying day."

VIII.

Away in speed Lord Cranstoun rode;
The Goblin Page behind abode;
His lord's command he ne'er withstood.
Though small his pleasure to do good.

As the corslet off he took,
 The dwarf espied the Mighty Book!
 Much he marvell'd a knight of pride,
 Like a book-bosom'd priest should ride:
 He thought not to search or stanch the wound
 Until the secret he had found.

IX.

The iron band, the iron clasp,
 Resisted long the elfin grasp:
 For when the first he had undone,
 It closed as he the next begun.
 Those iron clasps, that iron band,
 Would not yield to unchristen'd hand,
 Till he smear'd the cover o'er
 With the Borderer's curdled gore;
 A moment then the volume spread,
 And one short spell therein he read,
 It had much of glamour^a might,
 Could make a ladye seem a knight;
 The cobwebs on a dungeon wall
 Seem tapestry in lordly hall;
 A nut-shell seem a gilded barge,
 A sheeling^b seem a palace large,
 And youth seem age, and age seem youth—
 All was delusion, nought was truth.¹⁷

X.

He had not read another spell,
 When on his cheek a buffet fell,
 So fierce, it stretch'd him on the plain,
 Beside the wounded Deloraine.
 From the ground he rose dismay'd,
 And shook his huge and matted head;
 One word he mutter'd, and no more,
 "Man of age, thou smitest sore!"—
 No more the Elfin Page durst try
 Into the wondrous Book to pry;
 The clasps, though smear'd with Christian gore,
 Shut faster than they were before.
 He hid it underneath his cloak.—
 Now, if you ask who gave the stroke,
 I cannot tell, so mot I thrive;
 It was not given by man alive.

XI.

Unwillingly himself he address'd
 To do his master's high behest:
 He lifted up the living corse,
 And laid it on the weary horse;
 He led him into Branksome Hall,
 Before the beards of the warders all;
 And each did after swear and say,
 There only pass'd a wain of hay.

^a Magical delusion.^b A shepherd's hut.

He took him to Lord David's tower,
Even to the Ladye's secret bower;
And, but that stronger spells were spread,
And the door might not be opened,
He had laid him on her very bed.
Whate'er he did of gramarye,^a
Was always done maliciously;
He flung the warrior on the ground,
And the blood well'd freshly from the wound.

XII.

As he repass'd the outer court,
He spied the fair young child at sport:
He thought to train him to the wood;
For, at a word, be it understood,
He was always for ill, and never for good.
Seem'd to the boy, some comrade gay
Led him forth to the woods to play;
On the drawbridge the warders stout
Saw a terrier and lurcher passing out.

XIII.

He led the boy o'er bank and fell,
Until they came to a woodland brook;
The running stream dissolved the spell,^{1c}
And his own elvish shape he took.
Could he have had his pleasure vilde,
He had crippled the joints of the noble child;
Or, with his fingers long and lean,
Had strangled him in fiendish spleen:
But his awful mother he had in dread,
And also his power was limited;
So he but scowl'd on the startled child,
And darted through the forest wild;
The woodland brook he bounding cross'd,
And laugh'd, and shouted, "Lost! lost! lost!"—

XIV.

Full sore amaz'd at the wondrous change,
And frighten'd as a child might be,
At the wild yell and visage strange,
And the dark words of gramarye,
The child, amidst the forest bower,
Stood rooted like a lily flower;
And when at length, with trembling pace,
He sought to find where Branksome lay,
He fear'd to see that grisly face
Glare from some thicket on his way.
Thus, starting off, he journey'd on,
And deeper in the wood is gone,—
For aye the more he sought his way,
The farther still he went astray,—
Until he heard the mountains round
Ring to the baying of a hound.

^a Magic.

XV.

And hark! and hark! the deep-mouth'd bark
Comes nigher still, and nigher:
Bursts on the path a dark blood-hound,
His tawny muzzle track'd the ground,
And his red eye shot fire.
Soon as the wilder'd child saw he,
He flew at him right furiously,
I ween you would have seen with joy
The bearing of the gallant boy,
When, worthy of his noble sire,
His wet cheek glow'd 'twixt fear and ire!
He faced the blood-hound manfully,
And held his little bat on high;
So fierce he struck, the dog, afraid,
At cautious distance hoarsely bay'd,
But still in act to spring;
When dash'd an archer through the glade,
And when he saw the hound was stay'd,
He drew his tough bow-string;
But a rough voice cried, "Shoot not, hoy!
Ho! shoot not, Edward—"Tis a boy!"

XVI.

The speaker issued from the wood,
And check'd his fellow's surly mood,
And quell'd the ban-dog's ire:
He was an English yeoman good,
And born in Lancashire.
Well could he hit a fallow-deer
Five hundred feet him fro;
With hand more true, and eye more clear,
No archer bended bow.
His coal-black hair, shorn round and close,
Set off his sun-burn'd face:
Old England's sign, St George's cross,
His barret-cap did grace;
His bugle-horn hung by his side,
All in a wolf-skin baldric tied;
And his short falchion, sharp and clear,
Had pierced the throat of many a deer.

XVII.

His kirtle, made of forest green
Reach'd scantily to his knee;
And, at his belt, of arrows keen
A furbish'd sheaf bore he;
His buckler, scarce in breadth a span.
No larger fence had he;
He never counted him a man,
Would strike below the knee
His slacken'd bow was in his hand,
And the leash, that was his blood-hound's band.

XVIII.

He would not do the fair child harm,
 But held him with his powerful arm,
 That he might neither fight nor flee;
 For when the Red-Cross spied he,
 The boy strove long and violently.
 "Now, by St George," the archer cries,
 "Edward, methinks we have a prize!
 This boy's fair face, and courage free,
 Show he is come of high degree."—

XIX.

"Yes! I am come of high degree,
 For I am the heir of bold Buccleuch;
 And, if thou dost not set me free,
 False Southron, thou shalt dearly rue!
 For Walter of Harden shall come with speed,
 And William of Deloraine, good at need,
 And every Scott, from Esk to Tweed;
 And, if thou dost not let me go,
 Despite thy arrows, and thy bow,
 I'll have thee hang'd to feed the crow!"—

XX.

"Gramercy, for thy good-will, fair boy!
 My mind was never set so high;
 But if thou art chief of such a clan,
 And art the son of such a man,
 And ever comest to thy command,
 Our wardens had need to keep good order;
 My bow of yew to a hazel wand,
 Thou'lt make them work upon the border.
 Meantime, be pleased to come with me,
 For good Lord Dacre shalt thou see;
 I think our work is well begun,
 When we have taken thy father's son."

XXI.

Although the child was led away,
 In Branksome still he seem'd to stay,
 For so the Dwarf his part did play;
 And, in the shape of that young boy,
 He wrought the castle much annoy.
 The comrades of the young Buccleuch
 He pinch'd, and beat, and overthrew:
 Nay, some of them he wellnigh slew.
 He tore Dame Maudlin's silken tire,
 And, as Sym Hall stood by the fire,
 He lighted the match of his bandelier,^a
 And wofully scorch'd the hackbuteer.^b
 It may be hardly thought or said,
 The mischief that the urchin made,
 Till many of the castle guess'd,
 That the young Baron was possess'd!

^a *Bandelier*, belt for carrying ammunition.^b *Hackbuteer*, musketeer

XXII.

Well I ween the charm he held
The noble Ladye had soon dispell'd;
But she was deeply busy then
To tend the wounded Deloraine.
Much she wonder'd to find him lie,
On the stone threshold stretch'd along;
She thought some spirit of the sky
Had done the bold moss-trooper wrong,
Because, despite her precept dread,
Perchance he in the book had read;
But the broken lance in his bosom stood,
And it was earthly steel and wood.

XXIII.

She drew the splinter from the wound,
And with a charm she stanch'd the blood;
She bade the gash be cleansed and bound:
No longer by his couch she stood;
But she has ta'en the broken lance,
And wash'd it from the clotted gore,
And salv'd the splinter o'er and o'er.
William of Deloraine, in trance,
Whene'er she turned it round and round,
Twisted as if she gall'd his wound.
Then to her maidens she did say,
That he should be whole man and sound,
Within the course of a night and day.
Full long she toil'd; for she did rue
Mishap to friend so stout and true.

XXIV.

So pass'd the day—the evening fell,
'Twas near the time of curfew bell;
The air was mild, the wind was calm,
The stream was smooth, the dew was balm;
E'en the rude watchman, on the tower,
Enjoy'd and bless'd the lovely hour.
Far more fair Margaret loved and bless'd
The hour of silence and of rest.
On the high turret sitting lone,
She waked at times the lute's soft tone;
Touch'd a wild note, and all between
Thought of the bower of hawthorns green,
Her golden hair stream'd free from band,
Her fair cheek rested on her hand,
Her blue eyes sought the west afar,
For lovers love the western star.

XXV.

Is yon the star, o'er Penchryst Pen,
That rises slowly to her ken,
And, spreading broad its wavering light,
Shakes its loose tresses on the night?
Is yon red glare the western star?—
Oh! 'tis the beacon-blaze of war!

Scarce could she draw her tighten'd breath,
For well she knew the fire of death!

XXVI.

The warder view'd it blazing strong,
And blew his war-note loud and long,
Till, at the high and haughty sound,
Rock, wood, and river, rung around.
The blast alarm'd the festal hall,
And startled forth the warriors all;
Far downward, in the castle-yard,
Full many a torch and cresset glared;
And helms and plumes, confusedly toss'd,
Were in the blaze half-seen, half-lost;
And spears in wild disorder shook,
Like reeds beside a frozen brook.

XXVII.

The Seneschal, whose silver hair
Was redden'd by the torches' glare,
Stood in the midst, with gesture proud,
And issued forth his mandates loud:—
"On Penchryst glows a bale²⁰ of fire,
And three are kindling on Priestthaughswire;
Ride out, ride out,
The foe to scout!
Mount, mount for Branksome, every man!
Thou, Todrig, warn the Johnstone clan,
That ever are true and stout—
Ye need not send to Liddesdale;
For when they see the blazing bale,
Elliot and Armstrongs never fail.—
Ride, Alton, ride, for death and life!
And warn the Warder of the strife.
Young Gilbert, let our beacon blaze,
Our kin, and clan, and friends, to raise.

XXVIII.

Fair Margaret, from the turret head,
Heard, far below, the coursers' tread,
While loud the harness rung,
As to their seats, with clamour dread,
The ready horsemen sprung:
And trampling hoofs, and iron coats,
And leaders' voices, mingled notes,
And out! and out!
In hasty route,
The horsemen gallop'd forth;
Dispensing to the south to scout,
And east, and west, and north,
To view their coming enemies,
And warn their vassals and allies.

XXIX.

The ready page, with hurried hand,
 Awaked the need-fire's^a slumbering brand,
 And ruddy blush'd the heaven:
 For a sheet of flame, from the turret high,
 Waved like a blood-flag on the sky.
 All flaring and uneven;
 And soon a score of fires, I ween,
 From height, and hill, and cliff, were seen;
 Each with warlike tidings fraught;
 Each from each the signal caught;
 Each after each they glanced to sight,
 As stars arise upon the night.
 They gleam'd on many a dusky tarn,^b
 Haunted by the lonely earn;^c
 On many a cairn's^d grey pyramid,
 Where urns of mighty chiefs lie hid;
 Till high Dunedin the blazes saw,
 From Soltra and Dumpender Law;
 And Lothian heard the Regent's order,
 That all should bowne^d them for the Border.

XXX.

The livelong night in Branksome rang
 The ceaseless sound of steel;
 The castle-bell, with backward clang,
 Sent forth the larum peal;
 Was frequent heard the heavy jar,
 Where massy stone and iron bar
 Were piled on echoing keep and tower,
 To whelm the foe with deadly shower;
 Was frequent heard the changing guard,
 And watch-word from the sleepless ward;
 While, wearied by the endless din,
 Blood-hound and ban-dog yell'd within.

XXXI.

The noble Dame, amid the broil,
 Shared the grey Seneschal's high toil,
 And spoke of danger with a smile;
 Cheer'd the young knights, and council sage
 Held with the chiefs of riper age.
 No tidings of the foe were brought,
 Nor of his numbers knew they aught,
 Nor what in time of truce he sought.
 Some said that there were thousands ten;
 And others ween'd that it was nought
 But Leven Clans, or Tynedale men,
 Who came to gather in black-mail;^e
 And Liddesdale, with small avail,
 Might drive them lightly back agen.
 So pass'd the anxious night away
 And welcome was the peep of day.

^a Need-fire, beacon. ^b Tarn, a mountain lake. ^c Earn, a Scottish eagle
^d Bowne, make ready. ^e Protection money exacted by freebooters

CEASED the high sound—the listening throng
 Applaud the Master of the Song;
 And marvel much, in helpless age,
 So hard should be his pilgrimage.
 Had he no friend—no daughter dear,
 His wandering toil to share and cheer;
 No son to be his father's stay,
 And guide him on the rugged way?
 "Ay, once he had—but he was dead!"
 Upon the harp he stoop'd his head,
 And busied himself the strings withall,
 To hide the tear that fain would fall.
 In solemn measure, soft and slow,
 Arose a father's notes of woe.

CANTO FOURTH.

I.

SWEET Teviot! on thy silver tide
 The glaring bale-fires blaze no more;
 No longer steel-clad warriors ride
 Along thy wild and willow'd shore;
 Where'er thou wind'st, by dale or hill,
 All, all is peaceful, all is still,
 As if thy waves, since Time was born,
 Since first they roll'd upon the Tweed,
 Had only heard the shepherd's reed,
 Nor started at the bugle-horn.

II.

Unlike the tide of human time,
 Which, though it change in ceaseless flow
 Retains each grief, retains each crime
 Its earliest course was doom'd to know;
 And, darker as it downward bears,
 Is stained with past and present tears.
 Low as that tide has ebb'd with me,
 It still reflects to Memory's eye
 The hour my brave, my only boy,
 Fell by the side of great Dundee.²²
 Why, when the volleying musket play'd
 Against the bloody Highland blade,
 Why was not I beside him laid?—
 Enough—he died the death of fame;
 Enough—he died with conquering Græme.

III.

Now over Border, dale and fell,
 Full wide and far was terror spread;
 For pathless marsh, and mountain cell
 The peasant left his lowly shed.²³

The frighten'd flocks and herds were pent
 Beneath the peel's rude battlement;
 And maids and matrons dropp'd the tear,
 While ready warriors seized the spear.
 From Branksome's towers, the watchman's eye
 Dun wreaths of distant smoke can spy,
 Which, curling in the rising sun,
 Show'd southern ravage was begun.

IV.

Now loud the heedful gate-ward cried—
 "Prepare ye all for blows and blood!
 Watt Tinlinn,^a from the Liddel-side,
 Comes wading through the flood.
 Full oft the Tynedale snatchers knock
 At his lone gate, and prove the lock;
 It was but last St Barnabright
 They sieged him a whole summer night,
 But fled at morning; well they knew,
 In vain he never twang'd the yew.
 Right sharp has been the evening shower,
 That drove him from his Liddel tower;
 And, by my faith," the gate-ward said,
 "I think 'twill prove a Warden-Raid."^a

V.

While thus he spoke, the bold yeoman
 Entered the echoing barbican.
 He led a small and shaggy nag,
 That through a bog, from hag to hag,^b
 Could bound like any Billhope stag.
 It bore his wife and children twain;
 A half-clothed serf^c was all their train;
 His wife, stout, ruddy, and dark-brow'd,
 Of silver brooch and bracelet proud,²⁵
 Laughed to her friends among the crowd.
 He was of stature passing tall,
 But sparely formed, and lean withal;
 A batter'd morion on his brow;
 A leather jack, as fence enow,
 On his broad shoulders loosely hung;
 A border axe behind was slung;
 His spear, six Scottish ells in length,
 Seemed newly dyed with gore;
 His shafts and bow, of wondrous strength,
 His hardy partner bore.

VI.

Thus to the Ladye did Tinlinn show
 The tidings of the English foe:—
 "Belted Will Howard²⁶ is marching here,
 And hot Lord Dacre,²⁷ with many a spear,

^a An inroad commanded by the Warden in person

^b The broken ground in a bog.

^c Bondsman

And all the German hackbut-men,²⁸
 Who have long lain at Askerten:
 They cross'd the Liddel at curfew hour,
 And burned my little lonely tower:
 The fiend receive their souls therefor!
 It had not been burnt this year and more.
 Barn-yard and dwelling, blazing bright,
 Served to guide me on my flight;
 But I was chased the livelong night.
 Black John of Akeshaw, and Fergus Græme,
 Fast upon my traces came,
 Until I turn'd at Priesthaugh Scrogg,
 And shot their horses in the bog,
 Slew Fergus with my lance outright—
 I had him long at high despite:
 He drove my cows last Fastern's night."

VII.

Now weary scouts from Liddesdale,
 Fast hurrying in, confirm'd the tale;
 As far as they could judge by ken,
 Three hours would bring to Teviot's strand
 Three thousand armed Englishmen—
 Meanwhile, full many a warlike band,
 From Teviot, Aill, and Ettrick shade,
 Came in, their Chief's defence to aid.
 There was saddling and mounting in haste,
 There was pricking o'er moor and lea;
 He that was last at the trysting-place
 Was but lightly held of his gaye ladye.

VIII.

From fair St Mary's silver wave,
 From dreary Gamescleugh's dusky height,
 His ready lances Thirlestane brave
 Array'd beneath a banner bright.
 The treasured fleur-de-luce he claims,
 To wreathe his shield, since royal James,
 Encamp'd by Falla's mossy wave,
 The proud distinction grateful gave,
 For faith 'mid feudal jars;
 What time, save Thirlestane alone,
 Of Scotland's stubborn barons none
 Would march to southern wars;
 And hence, in fair remembrance worn,
 Yon sheaf of spears his crest has borne;
 Hence his high motto shines reveal'd—
 "Ready, aye ready," for the field.

IX.

An aged Knight, to danger steel'd,
 With many a moss-trooper came on;
 And azure in a golden field,
 The stars and crescent graced his shield,
 Without the bend of Murdieston.

Wide lay his lands round Oakwood tower,
 And wide round haunted Castle-Ower;
 High over Borthwick's mountain flood,
 His wood-embosom'd mansion stood;
 In the dark glen, so deep below,
 The herds of plunder'd England low;
 His bold retainer's daily food,
 And bought with danger, blows, and blood.
 Marauding chief! his sole delight
 The moonlight raid, the morning fight;
 Not even the Flower of Yarrow's charms,
 In youth, might tame his rage for arms;
 And still, in age, he spurn'd at rest,
 And still his brows the helmet press'd,
 Albeit the blanched locks below
 Were white as Dinlay's spotless snow:
 Five stately warriors drew the sword
 Before their father's band;
 A braver knight than Harden's lord
 Ne'er belted on a brand.

X.

Scotts of Eskdale, a stalwart band,
 Came trooping down the Todshawhill;
 By the sword they won their land,
 And by the sword they hold it still.
 Hearken, Ladye, to the tale,
 How thy sires won fair Eskdale.—
 Earl Morton was lord of that valley fair,
 The Beattisons were his vassals there.
 The Earl was gentle, and mild of mood,
 The vassals were warlike, and fierce, and rude;
 High of heart, and haughty of word,
 Little they reck'd of a tame liege Lord.
 The Earl into fair Eskdale came
 Homage and seignory to claim:
 Of Gilbert the Galliard a heriot^a he sought,
 Saying, "Give thy best steed, as a vassal ought."
 —"Dear to me is my bonny white steed,
 Oft has he help'd me at pinch of need;
 Lord and Earl though thou be, I trow
 I can reign Bucksfoot better than thou."—
 Word on word gave fuel to fire,
 Till so highly blazed the Beattison's ire,
 But that the Earl the flight had ta'en,
 The vassals there their lord had slain.
 Sore he plied both whip and spur,
 As he urged his steed through Eskdale muir;
 And it fell down a weary weight,
 Just on the threshold of Branksome gate.

XI.

The Earl was a wrathful man to see,
 Full fain avenged would he be.

^a The feudal superior, in certain cases, was entitled to the best horse of the vassal, in name of Heriot, or Herezeld.

In haste to Branksome's Lord he spoke,
 Saying, "Take these traitors to thy yoke;
 For a cast of hawks, and a purse of gold,
 All Eskdale I'll sell thee, to have and hold:
 Beshrew thy heart, of the Beattisons' clan
 If thou leavest on Eske a landed man;
 But spare Woodkerrick's lands alone,
 For he lent me his horse to escape upon."
 A glad man then was Branksome bold,
 Down he flung him the purse of gold;
 To Eskdale soon he spurr'd amain,
 And with him five hundred riders has ta'en.
 He left his merry men in the midst of the hill,
 And bade them hold them close and still;
 And alone he wended to the plain,
 To meet with the Galliard and all his train.
 To Gilbert the Galliard thus he said:
 "Know thou me for thy liege-lord and head;
 Deal not with me as with Morton tame,
 For Scotts play best at the roughest game.
 Give me in peace my heriot due,
 Thy bonny white steed, or thou shalt rue.
 If my horn I three times wind,
 Eskdale shall long have the sound in mind."—

XII.

Loudly the Beattison laugh'd in scorn;
 "Little care we for thy winded horn.
 Ne'er shall it be the Galliard's lot,
 To yield his steed to a haughty Scott.
 Wend thou to Branksome back on foot,
 With rusty spur and miry boot."—
 He blew his bugle so loud and hoarse,
 That the dun-deer started at fair Craikcross;
 He blew again so loud and clear,
 Through the grey mountain-mist there did lances appear;
 And the third blast rang with such a din,
 That the echoes answer'd from Pentoun-linn,
 And all his riders came lightly in.
 Then had you seen a gallant shock,
 When saddles were emptied, and lances broke!
 For each scornful word the Galliard had said,
 A Beattison on the field was laid.
 His own good sword the chieftain drew,
 And he bore the Galliard through and through;
 Where the Beattisons' blood mix'd with the rill,
 The Galliard's-Haugh men call it still.
 The Scotts have scatter'd the Beattison clan,
 In Eskdale they left but one landed man.
 The valley of Eske, from the mouth to the source
 Was lost and won for that bonny white horse.

XIII.

Whitslade the Hawk, and Headshaw came,
 And warriors more than I may name,

From Yarrow-cleugh to Hindhaugh-swair,
 From Woodhousele to Chester-glen.
 Troop'd man and horse, and bow and spear;
 Their gathering word was Bellenden.²⁹
 And better hearts o'er Border sod
 To siege or rescue never rode.
 The Ladye mark'd the aids come in,
 And high her heart of pride arose:
 She bade her youthful son attend,
 That he might know his father's friend,
 And learn to face his foes.
 "The boy is ripe to look on war;
 I saw him draw a cross-bow stiff,
 And his true arrow struck afar
 The raven's nest upon the cliff;
 The red cross, on a southern breast,
 Is broader than the raven's nest:
 Thou, Whitslade, shalt teach him his weapon to wield,
 And o'er him hold his father's shield."

XIV.

Well may you think, the wily page
 Cared not to face the Ladye sage.
 He counterfeited childish fear,
 And shriek'd, and shed full many a tear,
 And moan'd and plain'd in manner wild.
 The attendants to the Ladye told,
 Some fairy, sure, had changed the child,
 That wont to be so free and bold.
 Then wrathful was the noble dame;
 She blush'd blood-red for very shame:—
 "Hence! ere the clan his faintness view;
 Hence with the weakling to Buccleuch!—
 Watt Tinlinn, thou shalt be his guide
 To Rangleburn's lonely side.—
 Sure some fell fiend has curs'd our line,
 That coward should ere be son of mine!"—

XV.

A heavy task Watt Tinlinn had,
 To guide the counterfeited lad.
 Soon as the palfrey felt the weight
 Of that ill-omen'd elfish freight,
 He bolted, sprung, and rear'd amain,
 Nor heeded bit, nor curb, nor rein.
 It cost Watt Tinlinn mickle toil
 To drive him but a Scottish mile;
 But as a shallow brook they cross'd,
 The elf, amid the running stream,
 His figure chang'd, like form in dream,
 And fled, and shouted, "Lost! lost! lost!"
 Full fast the urchin ran and laugh'd,
 But faster still a cloth-yard shaft
 Whistled from startled Tinlinn's yew,
 And pierced his shoulder through and through.

Although the imp might not be slain,
 And though the wound soon heal'd again,
 Yet, as he ran, he yell'd for pain;
 And Wat of Tinlinn, much aghast,
 Rode back to Branksome fiery fast.

XVI.

Soon on the hill's steep verge he stood,
 That looks o'er Branksome's towers and wood;
 And martial murmurs, from below,
 Proclaim'd the approaching southern foe.
 Through the dark wood, in mingled tone,
 Were Border pipes and bugles blown;
 The coursers' neighing he could ken,
 A measured tread of marching men;
 While broke at times the solemn hum,
 The Almayn's sullen kettle-drum;
 And banners tall, of crimson sheen,
 Above the copse appear;
 And, glistening through the hawthorns green,
 Shine helm, and shield, and spear.

XVII.

Light forayers, first, to view the ground,
 Spurr'd their fleet coursers loosely round;
 Behind, in close array, and fast,
 The Kendal archers, all in green,
 Obedient to the bugle blast,
 Advancing from the wood were seen.
 To back and guard the archer band,
 Lord Dacre's bill-men were at hand:
 A hardy race, on Irthing bred,
 With kirtles white, and crosses red,
 Array'd beneath the banner tall,
 That stream'd o'er Acre's conquer'd wall;
 And minstrels, as they march'd in order,
 Play'd, "Noble Lord Dacre, he dwells on the Border."

XVIII.

Behind the English bill and bow,
 The mercenaries, firm and slow,
 Moved on to fight, in dark array,
 By Conrad led of Wolfenstein,
 Who brought the band from distant Rhine,
 And sold their blood for foreign pay.
 The camp their home, their law the sword,
 They knew no country, own'd no lord:
 They were not arm'd like England's sons,
 But bore the leven-darting guns;
 Buff coats, all frounced and broider'd o'er,
 And morsing-horns^a and scarfs they wore;
 Each better knee was bared, to aid
 The warriors in the escalade;

^a Powder-flasks.

All, as they march'd, in rugged tongue,
Songs of Teutonic feuds they sung.

XIX.

But louder still the clamour grew,
And louder still the minstrels blew,
When, from beneath the greenwood tree,
Rode forth Lord Howard's chivalry;
His men-at-arms, with glaive and spear,
Brought up the battle's glittering rear.
There many a youthful knight, full keen
To gain his spurs, in arms was seen;
With favour in his crest, or glove,
Memorial of his ladye-love.
So rode they forth in fair array,
Till full their lengthen'd lines display;
Then call'd a halt, and made a stand,
And cried, "St George, for merry England!"

XX.

Now every English eye, intent
On Branksome's armed towers was bent;
So near they were, that they might know
The straining harsh of each cross-bow;
On battlement and bartizan
Gleam'd axe, and spear, and partisan
Falcon and culver,^a on each tower,
Stood prompt their deadly hail to shower;
And flashing armour frequent broke
From eddying whirls of sable smoke,
Where upon tower and turret head,
The seething pitch and molten lead
Reek'd, like a witch's cauldron red,
While yet they gaze, the bridges fall,
The wicket opes, and from the wall
Rides forth the hoary Seneschal.

XXI.

Armed he rode, all save the head,
His white beard o'er his breast-plate spread;
Unbroke by age, erect his seat,
He rul'd his eager courser's gait;
Forced him, with chasten'd fire, to prance,
And, high curvetting, slow advance:
In sign of truce, his better hand
Display'd a peeled willow wand;
His squire, attending in the rear,
Bore high a gauntlet on a spear.^b
When they espied him riding out,
Lord Howard and Lord Dacre stout

^a Ancient pieces of artillery.

^b A glove upon a lance was the emblem of faith among the ancient Borderers, who were wont, when any one broke his word, to expose this emblem, and proclaim him a faithless villain at the first Border meeting. This ceremony was much dreaded.

Sped to the front of their array,
To hear what this old knight should say.

XXII.

"Ye English warden lords, of you
Demands the Ladye of Buccleuch,
Why, 'gainst the truce of Border tide,
In hostile guise ye dare to ride,
With Kendal bow, and Gilsland brand,
And all yon mercenary band,
Upon the bounds of fair Scotland?
My Ladye reads you swith return;
And, if but one poor straw you burn,
Or do our towers so much molest
As scare one swallow from her nest,
St Mary! but we'll light a brand
Shall warm your hearths in Cumberland."—

XXIII.

A wrathful man was Dacre's lord,
But calmer Howard took the word:
"May't please thy Dame, Sir Seneschal,
To seek the castle's outward wall,
Our pursuivant-at-arms shall show
Both why we came, and when we go."—
The message sped, the noble Dame
To the wall's outward circle came;
Each chief around lean'd on his spear,
To see the pursuivant appear.
All in Lord Howard's livery dress'd,
The lion argent deck'd his breast;
He led a boy of blooming hue—
O sight to meet a mother's view!
It was the heir of great Buccleuch.
Obeisance meet the herald made,
And thus his master's will he said:—

XXIV.

"It irks, high Dame, my noble Lords,
'Gainst ladye fair to draw their swords;
But yet they may not tamely see,
All through the Western Wardenry,
Your law-contemning kinsmen ride,
And burn and spoil the Border-side;
And ill besseems your rank and birth
To make your towers a flemens-firth.^a
We claim from thee William of Deloraine,
That he may suffer march-treason^b pain.
It was but last St Cuthbert's even
He prick'd to Stapleton on Leven,
Harried^b the lands of Richard Musgrava,
And slew his brother by dint of glaive.
Then, since a lone and widow'd Dame
These restless riders may not tame,

^a An asylum for outlaws.

^b Plundered.

Either receive within thy towers
 Two hundred of my master's powers,
 Or straight they sound their warrison.^a
 And storm and spoil thy garrison :
 And this fair boy, to London led,
 Shall good King Edward's page be bred."

XXV.

He ceased—and loud the boy did cry,
 And stretch'd his little arms on high ;
 Implored for aid each well-known face,
 And strove to seek the Dame's embrace.
 A moment changed that Ladye's cheer,
 Gush'd to her eye the unbidden tear ;
 She gazed upon the leaders round,
 And dark and sad each warrior frown'd ;
 Then, deep within her sobbing breast
 She lock'd the struggling sigh to rest ;
 Unalter'd and collected stood,
 And thus replied, in dauntless mood :—

XXVI.

" Say to your Lords of high emprise,
 Who war on women and on boys,
 That either William of Deloraine
 Will cleanse him, by oath, of march-treason stain,
 Or else he will the combat take
 'Gainst Musgrave, for his honour's sake.
 No knight in Cumberland so good,
 But William may count with him kin and blood.
 Knighthood he took of Douglas' sword,¹
 When English blood swell'd Ancram's ford ;²
 And, but Lord Dacre's steed was wight,
 And bare him ably in the flight,
 Himself had seen him dubb'd a knight.
 For the young heir of Branksome's line,
 God be his aid, and God be mine ;
 Through me no friend shall meet his doom ;
 Here, while I live no foe finds room.
 Then, if thy Lords their purpose urge,
 Take our defiance loud and high ;
 Our slogan is their lyke-wake^b dirge,
 Our moat, the grave where they shall lie.

XXVII.

Proud she look'd round, applause to claim—
 Then lighten'd Thirlestane's eye of flame ;
 His bugle Wat of Harden blew ;
 Pensils and pennons wide were flung,
 To heaven the Border slogan rung,
 " St Mary for the young Buccleuch ?"
 The English war-cry answered wide,
 And forward bent each southern spear ;

^a Note of assault.

^b *Lyke-wake*, the watching a corpse previous to interment.

Each Kendal archer made a stride,
 And drew the bowstring to his ear;
 Each minstrel's war-note loud was blown;—
 But, ere a grey-goose shaft had flown,
 A horseman gallop'd from the rear.

XXVIII.

"Ah! noble Lords!" he breathless said,
 "What treason has your march betray'd?
 What make you here, from aid so far,
 Before you walls, around you war?
 Your foemen triumph in the thought,
 That in the toils the lion's caught.
 Already on dark Ruberslaw
 The Douglas holds his weapon-schaw;^a
 The lances, waving in his train,
 Clothe the dun heath like autumn grain;
 And on the Liddel's northern strand,
 To bar retreat to Cumberland,
 Lord Maxwell ranks his merry men good,
 Beneath the eagle and the rood;
 And Jedwood, Eske, and Teviotdale,
 Have to proud Angus come;
 And all the Merse and Lauderdale
 Have risen with haughty Home.
 An exile from Northumberland,
 In Liddesdale I've wander'd long;
 But still my heart was with merry England,
 And cannot brook my country's wrong;
 And hard I've spurr'd all night to show
 The mustering of coming foe."

XXIX.

"And let them come!" fierce Dacre cried;
 "For soon yon crest, my father's pride,
 That swept the shores of Judah's sea,
 And waved in gales of Galilee,
 From Branksome's highest towers display'd,
 Shall mock the rescue's lingering aid!—
 Level each harquebuss on row;
 Draw, merry archers, draw the bow;
 Up, bill-men, to the walls and cry,
 Dacre for England, win or die!"—

XXX.

"Yet hear," quoth Howard, "calmly hear,
 Nor deem my words the words of fear:
 For who, in field or foray slack,
 Saw the blanche lion e'er fall back?³³
 But thus to risk our Border flower
 In strife against a kingdom's power,
 Ten thousand Scots 'gainst thousands three,
 Certes, were desperate policy.

^a *Weapon-schaw*, the military array of a county.

Nay, take the terms the Ladye made,
 Ere conscious of the advancing aid :
 Let Musgrave meet fierce Deloraine
 In single fight; and, if he gain,
 He gains for us; but if he's cross'd,
 'Tis but a single warrior lost :
 The rest, retreating as they came,
 Avoid defeat, and death, and shame."

XXXI.

Ill could the haughty Dacre brook
 His brother Warden's sage rebuke;
 And yet his forward step he staid,
 And slow and sullenly obeyed.
 But ne'er again the Border side
 Did these two lords in friendship ride;
 And this slight discontent, men say,
 Cost blood upon another day.

XXXII.

The pursuivant-at-arms again
 Before the castle took his stand;
 His trumpet call'd, with parleying strain,
 The leaders of the Scottish band;
 And he defied, in Musgrave's right,
 Stout Deloraine to single fight;
 A gauntlet at their feet he laid,
 And thus the terms of fight he said :—
 "If in the lists good Musgrave's sword
 Vanquish the knight of Deloraine,
 Your youthful chieftain, Branksome's Lord,
 Shall hostage for his clan remain :
 If Deloraine foil good Musgrave,
 The boy his liberty shall have.
 Howe'er it falls, the English band,
 Unharming Scots, by Scots unharm'd,
 In peaceful march, like men unarm'd,
 Shall straight retreat to Cumberland."

XXXIII.

Unconscious of the near relief,
 The proffer pleased each Scottish chief,
 Though much the Ladye sage gainsay'd;
 For though their hearts were brave and true,
 From Jedwood's recent sack they knew,
 How tardy was the Regent's aid;
 And you may guess the noble Dame
 Durst not the secret prescience own,
 Sprung from the art she might not name
 By which the coming help was known.
 Closed was the compact, and agreed
 That lists should be enclosed with speed,
 Beneath the castle, on a lawn :
 They fix'd the morrow for the strife,
 On foot, with Scottish axe and knife,
 At the fourth hour from peep of dawn ;

When Deloraine, from sickness freed,
Or else a champion in his stead,
Should for himself and chieftain stand,
Against stout Musgrave, hand to hand.

XXXIV.

I know right well, that, in their lay,
Full many minstrels sing and say,
Such combat should be made on horse,
On foaming steed, in full career,
With brand to aid, when as the spear
Should shiver in the course:
But he, the jovial harper, taught
Me, yet a youth, how it was fought,
In guise which now I say;
He knew each ordinance and clause
Of Black Lord Archibald's battle-laws,
In the old Douglas' day.
He brook'd not, he, that scoffing tongue
Should tax his minstrelsy with wrong,
Or call his song untrue:
For this, when they the goblet plied,
And such rude taunt had chafed his pride,
The bard of Reull he slew.
On Teviot's side, in fight they stood,
And tuneful hands were stain'd with blood;
Where still the thorn's white branches wave,
Memorial o'er his rival's grave.

XXXV.

Why should I tell the rigid doom,
That dragg'd my master to his tomb;
How Ousenam's maidens tore their hair,
Wept till their eyes were dead and dim,
And wrung their hands for love of him,
Who died at Jedwood Air?
He died!—his scholars, one by one,
To the cold silent grave are gone;
And I, alas! survive alone,
To muse o'er rivalries of yore,
And grieve that I shall hear no more
The strains, with envy heard before;
For, with my minstrel brethren fled,
My jealousy of song is dead.

He paused: the listening dames again
Applaud the hoary Minstrel's strain.
With many a word of kindly cheer,—
In pity half, and half sincere,—
Marvell'd the Duchess how so well
His legendary song could tell—
Of ancient deeds, so long forgot;
Of feuds, whose memory was not;

Of forests, now laid waste and bare;
 Of towers, which harbour now the hare;
 Of manners, long since changed and gone;
 Of chiefs, who under their grey stone
 So long had slept, that fickle Fame
 Had blotted from her rolls their name,
 And twined round some new minion's head
 The fading wreath for which they bled;
 In sooth, 'twas strange, this old man's verse
 Could call them from their marble hearse.

The Harper smiled, well pleased; for ne'er
 Was flattery lost on Poet's ear:
 A simple race! they waste their toil
 For the vain tribute of a smile;
 E'en when in age their flame expires,
 Her dulcet breath can fan its fires:
 Their drooping fancy wakes at praise,
 And strives to trim the short-lived blaze.

Smiled, then, well-pleased, the Aged Man.
 And thus his tale continued ran.

CANTO FIFTH.

I.

CALL it not vain:—they do not err,
 Who say, that when the Poet dies,
 Mute Nature mourns her worshipper,
 And celebrates his obsequies:
 Who say, tall cliff, and cavern ione,
 For the departed Bard make moan;
 That mountains weep in crystal rill;
 That flowers in tears of balm distil;
 Through his loved groves that breezes sigh,
 And oaks, in deeper groan, reply;
 And rivers teach their rushing wave
 To murmur dirges round his grave.

II.

Not that, in sooth, o'er mortal urn
 Those things inanimate can mourn;
 But that the stream, the wood, the gale,
 Is vocal with the plaintive wail
 Of those, who, else forgotten long,
 Lived in the poet's faithful song,
 And, with the poet's parting breath,
 Whose memory feels a second death.
 The Maid's pale shade, who wails her lot,
 That love, true love, should be forgot,

From rose and hawthorn shakes the tear
 Upon the gentle Minstrel's bier:
 The phantom Knight, his glory fled,
 Mourns o'er the field he heap'd with dead;
 Mounts the wild blast that sweeps amain,
 And shrieks along the battle-plain.
 The chief, whose antique crownlet long
 Still sparkled in the feudal song
 Now, from the mountain's misty throne,
 Sees, in the thanedom once his own,
 His ashes undistinguished lie,
 His place, his power, his memory die:
 His groans the lonely caverns fill,
 His tears of rage impel the rill;
 All mourn the Minstrel's harp unstrung,
 Their name unknown, their praise unsung.

III.

Scarcely the hot assault was staid,
 The terms of truce were scarcely made,
 When they could spy, from Branksome's towers,
 The advancing march of martial powers.
 Thick clouds of dust afar appear'd,
 And trampling steeds were faintly heard;
 Bright spears above the columns dun,
 Glanced momentary to the sun;
 And feudal banners fair display'd
 The bands that moved to Branksome's aid.

IV.

Vails not to tell each hardy clan,
 From the fair Middle Marches came;
 The Bloody Heart blazed in the van,
 Announcing Douglas, dreaded name!³⁴
 Vails not to tell what steeds did spurn,
 Where the Seven Spears of Wedderburne³⁵
 Their men in battle-order set;
 And Swinton laid the lance in rest,
 That tamed of yore the sparkling crest
 Of Clarence's Plantagenet.³⁶
 Nor list I say what hundreds more,
 From the rich Merse and Lammermore,
 And Tweed's fair borders to the war,
 Beneath the crest of old Dunbar,
 And Hepburn's mingled banners come,
 Down the steep mountain glittering far,
 And shouting still, "A Home! a Home!"³⁷

V.

Now squire and knight, from Branksome sent,
 On many a courteous message went;
 To every chief and lord they paid
 Meet thanks for prompt and powerful aid;
 And told them,—how a truce was made,

And how a day of fight was ta'en
 'Twixt Musgrave and stout Deloraine,
 And how the Ladye pray'd them dear,
 That all would stay the fight to see,
 And deign, in love and courtesy,
 To taste of Branksome cheer.
 Nor, while they bade to feast each Scot,
 Were England's noble Lords forgot.
 Himself, the hoary Seneschal
 Rode forth, in seemly terms to call
 Those gallant foes to Branksome Hall.
 Accepted Howard, than whom knight
 Was never dubb'd, more bold in fight;
 Nor, when from war and armour free,
 More famed for stately courtesy:
 But angry Dacre rather chose
 In his pavilion to repose.

VI.

Now, noble Dame, perchance you ask,
 How these two hostile armies met?
 Deeming it were no easy task
 To keep the truce which here was set;
 Where martial spirits, all on fire,
 Breathed only blood and mortal ire.—
 By mutual inroads, mutual blows,
 By habit, and by nation, foes,
 They met on Teviot's strand;
 They met and sate them mingled down,
 Without a threat, without a frown,
 As brothers meet in foreign land:
 The hands, the spear that lately grasp'd,
 Still in the mailed gauntlet clasp'd,
 Were interchanged in greeting dear;
 Visors were raised, and faces shown,
 And many a friend, to friend made known,
 Partook of social cheer.
 Some drove the jolly bowl about;
 With dice and draughts some chased the day,
 And some, with many a merry shout,
 In riot, revelry, and rout,
 Pursued the foot-ball play.

VII.

Yet, be it known, had bugles blown,
 Or sign of war been seen,
 Those bands, so fair together ranged,
 Those hands, so frankly interchanged,
 Had dyed with gore the green:
 The merry shout by Teviot-side
 Had sunk in war-cries wild and wide,
 And in the groan of death;
 And whingers,* now in friendship bare,
 The social meal to part and share,
 Had found a bloody sheath.

* A sort of knife or poniard.

'Twixt truce and war, such sudden change
 Was not infrequent, nor held strange,
 In the old Border-day:³³
 But yet on Branksome's towers and town,
 In peaceful merriment, sunk down
 The sun's declining ray.

VIII.

The blithsome signs of wassel gay.
 Decay'd not with the dying day:
 Soon through the latticed windows tall
 Of lofty Branksome's lordly hall,
 Divided square by shafts of stone,
 Huge flakes of ruddy lustre shone;
 Nor less the gilded rafters rang
 With merry harp and beakers' clang:
 And frequent, on the darkening plain,
 Loud hollo, whoop, or whistle ran,
 As bands, their stragglers to regain,
 Give the shrill watchword of their clan;
 And revellers, o'er their bowls, proclaim
 Douglas' or Dacre's conquering name.

IX.

Less frequent heard, and fainter still,
 At length the various clamours died:
 And you might hear, from Branksome hill,
 No sound but Teviot's rushing tide;
 Save when the changing sentinel
 The challenge of his watch could tell;
 And save, where, through the dark profound,
 The clanging axe and hammer's sound
 Rung from the nether lawn;
 For many a busy hand toll'd there,
 Strong pales to shape, and beams to square,
 The lists' dread barriers to prepare
 Against the morrow's dawn.

X.

Margaret from hall did soon retreat,
 Despite the Dame's reproving eye;
 Nor mark'd she, as she left her seat,
 Full many a stifled sigh;
 For many a noble warrior strove
 To win the Flower of Teviot's love,
 And many a bold ally.—
 With throbbing head and anxious heart,
 All in her lonely bower apart,
 In broken sleep she lay:
 By times, from silken couch she rose;
 While yet the banner'd hosts repose,
 She view'd the dawning day:
 Of all the hundreds sunk to rest,
 First woke the loveliest and the best.

XI.

She gazed upon the inner court,
Which in the tower's tall shadow lay;
Where coursers' clang, and stamp, and snort,
Had rung the livelong yesterday;
Now, still as death; till stalking slow,—
The jingling spurs announced his tread,—
A stately warrior pass'd below;
But when he raised his plumed head—
Blessed Mary! can it be?—
Secure, as if in Ousenam bowers,
He walks through Branksome's hostile towers,
With fearless step and free.
She dared not sign, she dared not speak—
Oh! if one page's slumbers break,
His blood the price must pay!
Not all the pearls Queen Mary wears,
Not Margaret's yet more precious tears,
Shall buy his life a day.

XII.

Yet was his hazard small; for well
You may bethink you of the spell
Of that sly urchin page;
This to his lord he did impart,
And made him seem, by glamour art,
A knight from Hermitage.
Unchallenged thus, the warder's post,
The court, unchallenged, thus he cross'd,
For all the vassalage:
But O! what magic's quaint disguise
Could blind fair Margaret's azure eyes!
She started from her seat;
While with surprise and fear she strove,
And both could scarcely master love—
Lord Henry's at her feet.

XIII.

Oft have I mused, what purpose bad
That foul malicious urchin had
To bring this meeting round;
For happy love's a heavenly sight,
And by a vile malignant sprite
In such no joy is found;
And oft I've deem'd, perchance he thought
Their erring passion might have wrought
Sorrow, and sin, and shame;
And death to Cranstoun's gallant Knight,
And to the gentle ladye bright,
Disgrace, and loss of fame.
But earthly spirit could not tell
The heart of them that loved so well.
True love's the gift which God has given
To man alone beneath the heaven:

It is not fantasy's hot fire,
 Whose wishes, soon as granted, fly;
 It liveth not in fierce desire,
 With dead desire it doth not die;
 It is the secret sympathy,
 The silver link, the silken tie,
 Which heart to heart, and mind to mind,
 In body and in soul can bind.—
 Now leave we Margaret and her Knight,
 To tell you of the approaching fight.

XIV.

Their warning blasts the bugles blew,
 The pipe's shrill port^a aroused each clan
 In haste, the deadly strife to view,
 The trooping warriors eager ran:
 Thick round the lists their lances stood,
 Like blasted pines in Ettrick Wood;
 To Branksome many a look they threw,
 The combatants' approach to view,
 And bandied many a word of boast,
 About the knight each favour'd most.

XV.

Meantime full anxious was the Dame;
 For now arose disputed claim,
 Of who should fight for Deloraine,
 Twixt Harden and twixt Thirlestaine:
 They 'gan to reckon kin and rent,
 And frowning brow on brow was bent;
 But yet not long the strife—for, lo!
 Himself, the knight of Deloraine,
 Strong, as it seem'd and free from pain,
 In armour sheath'd from top to toe,
 Appear'd, and craved the combat due.
 The Dame her charm successful knew,
 And the fierce chiefs their claims withdrew.

XVI.

When for the lists they sought the plain,
 The stately Ladye's silken rein
 Did noble Howard hold;
 Unarmed by her side he walk'd,
 And much, in courteous phrase, they talk'd
 Of feats of arms of old.
 Costly his garb—his Flemish ruff
 Fell o'er his doublet, shaped of buff,
 With satin slash'd and lined;
 Tawny his boot, and gold his spur,
 His cloak was all of Poland fur,
 His hose with silver twined;
 His Bilboa blade, by Marchmen felt,
 Hung in a broad and studded belt;

^a A martial piece of music, adapted to the bagpipes.

Hence, in rude phrase, the Borderers still
Call'd noble Howard, Belted Will.

XVII.

Behind Lord Howard and the Dame,
Fair Margaret on her palfrey came,
Whose foot-cloth swept the ground :
White was her wimple, and her veil,
And her loose locks a chaplet pale
Of whitest roses bound ;
The lordly Angus, by her side,
In courtesy to cheer her tried ;
Without his aid, her hand in vain
Had strove to guide her broider'd rein.
He deem'd, she shudder'd at the sight
Of warriors met for mortal fight ;
But cause of terror, all unguess'd,
Was fluttering in her gentle breast,
When, in their chairs of crimson placed,
The Dame and she the barriers graced.

XVIII.

Prize of the field, the young Buccleuch,
An English knight led forth to view ;
Scarce rued the boy his present plight,
So much he long'd to see the fight.
Within the lists, in knightly pride,
High Home and haughty Dacre ride ;
Their leading staffs of steel they wield,
As marshals of the mortal field ;
While to each knight their care assign'd
Like vantage of the sun and wind.
Then heralds hoarse did loud proclaim,
In King and Queen, and Warden's name,
That none, while lasts the strife,
Should dare, by look, or sign, or word,
Aid to a champion to afford,
On peril of his life ;
And not a breath the silence broke,
Till thus the alternate Herald spoke :—

XIX.

ENGLISH HERALD.

"Here standeth Richard of Musgrave,
Good knight and true, and freely born,
Amends from Deloraine to crave,
For foul despiteous scathe and scorn.
He sayeth, that William of Deloraine
Is traitor false by Border laws ;
This with his sword he will maintain,
So help him God, and his good cause !"

XX.

SCOTTISH HERALD.

"Here standeth William of Deloraine,
Good knight and true, of noble strain,

Who sayeth, that foul treason's stain,
 Since he bore arms, ne'er soil'd his coat :
 And that, so help him God above!
 He will on Musgrave's body prove,
 He lies most foully in his throat."

LORD DACRE.

"Forward, brave champions, to the fight!
 Sound trumpets!"—

LORD HOME.

—"God defend the right!"—

Then Teviot! how thine echoes rang,
 When bugle-sound and trumpet-clang
 Let loose the martial foes,
 And in mid list, with shield poised high,
 And measured step and wary eye,
 The combatants did close.

XXI.

Ill would it suit your gentle ear,
 Ye lovely listeners, to hear
 How to the axe the helms did sound,
 And blood pour'd down from many a wound;
 For desperate was the strife, and long,
 And either warrior fierce and strong.
 But, were each dame a listening knight,
 I well could tell how warriors fight!
 For I have seen war's lightning flashing,
 Seen the claymore with bayonet clashing,
 Seen through red blood the war-horse dashing,
 And scorn'd, amid the reeling strife,
 To yield a step for death or life.—

XXII.

'Tis done, 'tis done! that fatal blow
 Has stretch'd him on the bloody plain;
 He strives to rise—Brave Musgrave, no!
 Thence never shalt thou rise again!
 He chokes in blood—some friendly hand
 Undo the visor's barred band,
 Unfix the gorget's iron clasp,
 And give him room for life to gasp!
 O, bootless aid!—haste, holy Friar,
 Haste, ere the sinner shall expire!
 Of all his guilt let him be shriven,
 And smooth his path from earth to heaven!

XXIII.

In haste the holy Friar sped;—
 His naked foot was dyed with red,
 As through the lists he ran:
 Unmindful of the shouts on high,
 That hail'd the conqueror's victory
 He raised the dying man;

Loose waved his silver beard and hair,
 As o'er him he kneel'd down in prayer;
 And still the crucifix on high
 He holds before his darkening eye;
 And still he bends an anxious ear,
 His faltering penitence to hear;
 Still props him from the bloody sod,
 Still, even when soul and body part,
 Pours ghostly comfort on his heart,
 And bids him trust in God!
 Unheard he prays;—the death-pang's o'er!
 Richard of Musgrave breathes no more.

XXIV.

As if exhausted in the fight,
 Or musing o'er the piteous sight,
 The silent victor stands;
 His beaver did he not unclasp,
 Mark'd not the shouts, felt not the grasp
 Of gratulating hands.
 When lo! strange cries of wild surprise,
 Mingled with seeming terror, rise
 Among the Scottish bands;
 And all, amid the throng'd array,
 In panic haste gave open way
 To a half-naked ghastly man,
 Who downward from the castle ran:
 He cross'd the barriers at a bound,
 And wild and haggard look'd around,
 As dizzy, and in pain;
 And all, upon the armed ground,
 Knew William of Deloraine!
 Each ladye sprung from seat with speed;
 Vaulted each marshal from his steed;
 "And who art thou," they cried,
 "Who hast this battle fought and won?"
 His plumed helm was soon undone—
 "Cranstoun of Teviot-side!
 For this fair prize I've fought and won,"—
 And to the Ladye led her son.

XXV.

Full oft the rescued boy she kiss'd,
 And often press'd him to her breast;
 For, under all her dauntless show,
 Her heart had throbb'd at every blow.
 Yet not Lord Cranstoun deign'd she greet,
 Though low he kneeled at her feet.
 Me lists not tell what words were made,
 What Douglas, Home, and Howard, said—
 —For Howard was a generous foe—
 And how the clan united pray'd
 The Ladye would the feud forego,
 And deign to bless the nuptial hour
 Of Cranstoun's Lord and Teviot's Flower.

XXVI.

She look'd to river, look'd to hill,
 Thought on the Spirit's prophecy,
 Then broke her silence stern and still,—
 "Not you, but Fate, has vanquish'd me;
 Their influence kindly stars may shower
 On Teviot's tide and Branksome's tower,
 For pride is quell'd, and love is free."—
 She took fair Margaret by the hand,
 Who, breathless, trembling, scarce might stand;
 That hand to Cranstoun's lord gave she :—
 "As I am true to thee and thine,
 Do thou be true to me and mine !
 This clasp of love our bond shall be;
 For this is your betrothing day,
 And all these noble lords shall stay,
 To grace it with their company."

XXVII.

All as they left the listed plain,
 Much of the story she did gain;
 How Cranstoun fought with Deloraine,
 And of his page, and of the Book
 Which from the wounded knight he took;
 And how he sought her castle high,
 That morn, by help of gramarye;
 How, in Sir William's armour dight,
 Stolen by his page, while slept the knight,
 He took on him the single fight.
 But half his tale he left unsaid,
 And linger'd till he join'd the maid.—
 Cared not the Ladye to betray
 Her mystic arts in view of day;
 But well she thought, ere midnight came,
 Of that strange page the pride to tame,
 From his foul hands the Book to save,
 And send it back to Michael's grave.—
 Needs not to tell each tender word
 'Twixt Margaret and 'twixt Cranstoun's lord;
 Nor how she told the former woes,
 And how her bosom fell and rose,
 While he and Musgrave bandied blows.—
 Needs not these lovers' joys to tell:
 One day, fair maids, you'll know them well.

XXVIII.

William of Deloraine, some chance
 Had waken'd from his deathlike trance;
 And taught that, in the listed plain,
 Another, in his arms and shield,
 Against fierce Musgrave axe did wield,
 Under the name of Deloraine.
 Hence, to the field, unarm'd, he ran,
 And hence his presence scared the clan,

Who held him for some fleeting wraith,^a
 And not a man of blood and breath.
 Not much this new ally he loved,
 Yet, when he saw what hap had proved,
 He greeted him right heartilie:
 He would not waken old debate,
 For he was void of rancorous hate,
 Though rude, and scant of courtesy;
 In raids he spilt but seldom blood .
 Unless when men-at-arms withstood,
 Or, as was meet, for deadly feud.
 He ne'er bore grudge for stalwart blow,
 Ta'en in fair fight from gallant foe:
 And so 'twas seen of him, e'en now,
 When on dead Musgrave he look'd down;
 Grief darkened on his rugged brow,
 Though half disguised with a frown;
 And thus, while sorrow bent his head,
 His foeman's epitaph he made:—

XXIX.

"Now, Richard Musgrave, liest thou here
 I ween, my deadly enemy;
 For, if I slew thy brother dear,
 Thou slew'st a sister's son to me;
 And when I lay in dungeon dark,
 Of Naworth Castle, long months three,
 Till ransom'd for a thousand mark,
 Dark Musgrave, it was long of thee.
 And, Musgrave, could our fight be tried,
 And thou wert now alive, as I,
 No mortal man should us divide,
 Till one, or both of us, did die:
 Yet rest thee God! for well I know
 I ne'er shall find a nobler foe.
 In all the northern counties here,
 Whose word is Snaffle, spur, and spear,
 Thou wert the best to follow gear!
 'Twas pleasure, as we look'd behind,
 To see how thou the chase could'st wind,
 Cheer the dark blood-hound on his way,
 And with the bugle rouse the fray!³⁹
 I'd give the lands of Deloraine,
 Dark Musgrave were alive again."—

XXX.

So mourn'd he, till Lord Dacre's band
 Were bowning back to Cumberland.
 They raised brave Musgrave from the field,
 And laid him on his bloody shield;
 On levell'd lances, four and four,
 By turns, the noble burden bore.

^a The spectral apparition of a living person.

Before, at times, upon the gale,
 Was heard the Minstrel's plaintive wail;
 Behind, four priests, in sable stole,
 Sung requiem for the warrior's soul:
 Around, the horsemen slowly rode;
 With trailing pikes the spearmen trode;
 And thus the gallant knight they bore,
 Through Liddesdale to Leven's shore;
 Thence to Holme Coltrame's lofty nave,
 And laid him in his father's grave.

THE harp's wild notes, though hush'd the song,
 The mimic march of death prolong;
 Now seems it far, and now a-near,
 Now meets, and now eludes the ear;
 Now seems some mountain side to sweep,
 Now faintly dies in valley deep;
 Seems now as if the Minstrel's wail,
 Now the sad requiem, loads the gale;
 Last, o'er the warrior's closing grave,
 Rung the full choir in choral stave.

After due pause, they bade him tell,
 Why he, who touch'd the harp so well,
 Should thus, with ill-rewarded toil,
 Wander a poor and thankless soil,
 When the more generous Southern Land
 Would well requite his skilful hand.

The Aged Harper, howsoe'er
 His only friend, his harp, was dear,
 Liked not to hear it rank'd so high
 Above his flowing poesy:
 Less liked he still, that scornful jeer
 Misprised the land he loved so dear;
 High was the sound, as thus again
 The Bard resumed his minstrel strain.

CANTO SIXTH.

I.

BREATHES there the man, with soul so dead,
 Who never to himself hath said,
 This is my own, my native land!
 Whose heart hath ne'er within him burn'd,
 As home his footsteps he hath turn'd,
 From wandering on a foreign strand!

If such there breathe, go, mark him well ;
 For him no minstrel raptures swell ;
 High though his titles, proud his name,
 Boundless his wealth as wish can claim ;
 Despite those titles, power, and pelf,
 The wretch, concentred all in self,
 Living, shall forfeit fair renown,
 And, doubly dying, shall go down
 To the vile dust, from whence he sprung,
 Unwept, unhonour'd, and unsung.

II.

O Caledonia! stern and wild,
 Meet nurse for a poetic child !
 Land of brown heath and shaggy wood,
 Land of the mountain and the flood,
 Land of my sires ! what mortal hand
 Can e'er untie the filial band,
 That knits me to thy rugged strand !
 Still, as I view each well-known scene,
 Think what is now, and what hath been,
 Seems as, to me, of all bereft,
 Sole friends thy woods and streams were left ;
 And thus I love them better still,
 Even in extremity of ill.
 By Yarrow's streams still let me stray,
 Though none should guide my feeble way ;
 Still feel the breeze down Ettrick break,
 Although it chill my wither'd cheek ;
 Still lay my head by Teviot Stone,
 Though there, forgotten and alone,
 The Bard may draw his parting groan.

III.

Not scorn'd like me ! to Branksome Hall
 The Minstrels came, at festive call ;
 Trooping they came, from near and far.
 The jovial priests of mirth and war ;
 Alike for feast and fight prepared,
 Battle and banquet both they shared.
 Of late, before each martial clan,
 They blew their death-note in the van,
 But now, for every merry mate,
 Rose the portcullis' iron grate ;
 They sound the pipe, they strike the string.
 They dance, they revel, and they sing,
 Till the rude turrets shake and ring.

IV.

Me lists not at this tide declare
 The splendour of the spousal rite,
 How muster'd in the chapel fair
 Both maid and matron, squire and knight ;

" The preceding four lines now form the inscription on the monument of
 Sir Walter Scott in the market-place of Selkirk.

Me lists not tell of owches rare,
 Of mantels green, and braided hair,
 And kirtles furr'd with miniver;
 What plumage waved the altar round,
 How spurs and ringing chainlets sound;
 And hard it were for bard to speak
 The changeful hue of Margaret's cheek;
 That lovely hue which comes and flies,
 As awe and shame alternate rise!

V.

Some bards have sung, the Ladye high
 Chapel or altar came not nigh;
 Nor durst the rites of spousal grace,
 So much she fear'd each holy place.
 False slanders these:—I trust right well
 She wrought not by forbidden spell;⁴⁰
 For mighty words and signs have power
 O'er sprites in planetary hour:
 Yet scarce I praise their venturous part,
 Who tamper with such dangerous art,
 But this for faithful truth I say,
 The Ladye by the altar stood,
 Of sable velvet her array,
 And on her head a crimson hood,
 With pearls embroider'd and entwined,
 Guarded with gold, with ermine lined;
 A merlin sat upon her wrist,⁴¹
 Held by a leash of silken twist.

VI.

The spousal rites were ended soon:
 'Twas now the merry hour of noon,
 And in the lofty arched hall
 Was spread the gorgeous festival.
 Steward and squire, with heedful haste,
 Marshall'd the rank of every guest;
 Pages, with ready blade, were there,
 The mighty meal to carve and share:
 O'er capon, heron-shew, and crane,
 And princely peacock's gilded train,⁴²
 And o'er the boar-head, garnish'd brave,
 And cygnet from St Mary's wave;
 O'er ptarmigan and venison,
 The priest had spoke his benison.
 Then rose the riot and the din,
 Above, beneath, without, within
 For, from the lofty balcony,
 Rung trumpet, shalm, and psaltery:
 Their clanging bowls old warriors quaff'd,
 Loudly they spoke, and loudly laugh'd;
 Whisper'd young knights, in tone more mild,
 To ladies fair, and ladies smiled.
 The hooded hawks, high perch'd on beam,
 The clamour join'd with whistling scream.

And flapp'd their wings, and shook their bells,
 In concert with the stag-hounds' yells.
 Round go the flasks of ruddy wine,
 From Bourdeaux, Orleans, or the Rhine;
 Their tasks the busy sewers ply,
 And all is mirth and revelry.

VII.

The Goblin Page, omitting still
 No opportunity of ill,
 Strove now, while blood ran hot and high,
 To rouse debate and jealousy;
 Till Conrad, Lord of Wolfenstein,
 By nature fierce, and warm with wine,
 And now in humour highly cross'd,
 About some steeds his band had lost,
 High words to words succeeding still,
 Smote, with his gauntlet, stout Hunthill;⁴³
 A hot and hardy Rutherford,
 Whom men called Dickon Draw-the-sword.
 He took it on the page's saye,
 Hunthill had driven these steeds away.
 Then Howard, Home, and Douglas rose,
 The kindling discord to compose:
 Stern Rutherford right little said,
 But bit his glove,⁴⁴ and shook his head.—
 A fortnight thence, in Inglewood,
 Stout Conrade, cold, and drench'd in blood,
 His bosom gored with many a wound,
 Was by a woodman's lyme-dog found;
 Unknown the manner of his death,
 Gone was his brand, both sword and sheath;
 But ever from that time, 'twas said,
 That Dickon wore a Cologne blade.

VIII.

The dwarf, who fear'd his master's eye
 Might his foul treachery espie,
 Now sought the castle buttery,
 Where many a yeoman, bold and free,
 Revell'd as merrily and well
 As those that sat in lordly selle.
 Watt Tinlinn, there, did frankly raise
 The pledge to Arthur Fire-the-Braes;
 And he, as by his breeding bound,
 To Howard's merry-men sent it round.
 To quit them, on the English side,
 Red Roland Forster loudly cried,
 "A deep carouse to yon fair bride!"—
 At every pledge, from vat and pail,
 Foam'd forth in floods the nut-brown ale;
 While shout the riders every one:
 Such day of mirth ne'er cheer'd their clan.
 Since old Buccleuch the name did gain,
 When in the clench the buck was ta'en.

IX.

The wily page, with vengeful thought,
 Remember'd him of Tinlinn's yew,
 And swore, it should be dearly bought
 That ever he the arrow drew.
 First, he the yeoman did molest,
 With bitter gibe and taunting jest;
 Told, how he fled at Solway strife,
 And how Hob Armstrong cheer'd his wife;
 Then, shunning still his powerful arm,
 At unawares he wrought him harm;
 From trencher stole his choicest cheer,
 Dash'd from his lips his can of beer;
 Then, to his knee sly creeping on,
 With bodkin pierced him to the bone:
 The venom'd wound, and festering joint,
 Long after rued that bodkin's point.
 The startled yeoman swore and spurn'd,
 And board and flagons overturn'd.
 Riot and clamour wild began;
 Back to the hall the Urchin ran;
 Took in a darkling nook his post,
 And grinn'd, and mutter'd, "Lost! lost! lost!"

X.

By this, the Dame, lest farther fray
 Should mar the concord of the day,
 Had bid the Minstrels tune their lay.
 And first stept forth old Albert Græme,
 The Minstrel of that ancient name:⁴⁵
 Was none who struck the harp so well,
 Within the Land Debateable;
 Well friended, too, his hardy kin,
 Whoever lost, were sure to win;
 They sought the beeves that made their broth,
 In Scotland and in England both.
 In homely guise, as nature bade,
 His simple song the Borderer said.

XI.

ALBERT GRÆME.

It was an English ladye bright,
 (The sun shines fair on Carlisle wall,)
 And she would marry a Scottish knight,
 For Love will still be lord of all.

Blithely they saw the rising sun,
 When he shone fair on Carlisle wall,
 But they were sad ere day was done,
 Though Love was still the lord of all.

Her sire gave brooch and jewel fine,
 Where the sun shines fair on Carlisle wall
 Her brother gave but a flask of wine,
 For ire that Love was lord of all.

For she had lands, both meadow and lea,
 Where the sun shines fair on Carlisle wall,
 And he swore her death, ere he would see
 A Scottish knight the lord of all.

XII.

That wine she had not tasted well,
 (The sun shines fair on Carlisle wall,)
 When dead, in her true love's arms, she fell,
 For Love was still the lord of all!

He pierced her brother to the heart,
 Where the sun shines fair on Carlisle wall :--
 So perish all would true love part,
 That Love may still be lord of all!

And then he took the cross divine,
 (Where the sun shines fair on Carlisle wall,)
 And died for her sake in Palestine ;
 So Love was still the lord of all.

Now all ye lovers, that faithful prove,
 (The sun shines fair on Carlisle wall,)
 Pray for their souls who died for love,
 For Love shall still be lord of all!

XIII.

As ended Albert's simple lay,
 Arose a bard of loftier port ;
 For sonnet, rhyme, and roundelay,
 Renown'd in haughty Henry's court :
 There rung thy harp, unrivall'd long,
 Fitztraver of the silver song !
 The gentle Surrey loved his lyre—
 Who has not heard of Surrey's fame ?²⁶
 His was the hero's soul of fire,
 And his the bard's immortal name,
 And his was love, exalted high
 By all the glow of chivalry.

XIV.

They sought, together, climes afar,
 And oft, within some olive grove,
 When even came with twinkling star,
 They sung of Surrey's absent love.
 His step the Italian peasant stay'd,
 And deem'd that spirits from on high,
 Round where some hermit saint was laid,
 Were breathing heavenly melody ;
 So sweet did harp and voice combine.
 To praise the name of Geraldine.

XV.

Fitztraver ! O what tongue may say
 The pangs thy faithful bosom knew

When Surrey, of the deathless lay,
 Ungrateful Tudor's sentence slew?
 Regardless of the tyrant's frown,
 His harp call'd wrath and vengeance down.
 He left, for Naworth's iron towers,
 Windsor's green glades, and courtly bowers,
 And, faithful to his patron's name,
 With Howard still Fitztraver came;
 Lord William's foremost favourite he,
 And chief of all his minstrelsy.

XVI.

FITZTRAYER.

'Twas All-soul's eve, and Surrey's heart beat high;
 He heard the midnight bell with anxious start,
 Which told the mystic hour, approaching nigh,
 When wise Cornelius promised, by his art,
 To show to him the ladye of his heart,
 Albeit betwixt them roar'd the ocean grim;
 Yet so the sage had hight to play his part,
 That he should see her form in life and limb,
 And mark, if still she loved, and still she thought of him.

XVII.

Dark was the vaulted room of gramarye,
 To which the wizard led the gallant Knight,
 Save that before a mirror, huge and high,
 A hallow'd taper shed a glimmering light
 On mystic implements of magic might;
 On cross, and character, and talisman,
 And almagest, and altar, nothing bright:
 For fitful was the lustre, pale and wan,
 As watchlight by the bed of some departing man.

XVIII.

But soon, within that mirror huge and high,
 Was seen a self-emitted light to gleam;
 And forms upon its breast the Earl 'gan spy,
 Cloudy and indistinct, as feverish dream;
 Till, slow arranging, and defined, they seem
 To form a lordly and a lofty room,
 Part lighted by a lamp with silver beam,
 Placed by a couch of Agra's silken loom,
 And part by moonshine pale, and part was hid in gloom.

XIX.

Fair all the pageant—but how passing fair
 The slender form, which lay on couch of Ind!
 O'er her white bosom stray'd her hazel hair,
 Pale her dear cheek, as if for love she pined;
 All in her night-robe loose she lay reclined,
 And, pensive, read from tablet eburnine,
 Some strain that seem'd her inmost soul to find:—
 That favour'd strain was Surrey's raptured line,
 That fair and lovely form, the Lady Geraldine.

XX.

Slow roll'd the clouds upon the lovely form,
And swept the goodly vision all away—
So royal envy roll'd the murky storm
O'er my beloved Master's glorious day.
Thou jealous, ruthless tyrant! Heaven repay
On thee, and on thy children's latest line,
The wild caprice of thy despotic sway,
The gory bridal bed, the plunder'd shrine,
The murder'd Surrey's blood, the tears of Geraldine!

XXI.

Both Scots, and Southern chiefs, prolong
Applauses of Fitztraver's song;
These hated Henry's name as death,
And those still held the ancient faith.--
Then, from his seat, with lofty air,
Rose Harold, bard of brave St Clair:
St Clair, who, feasting high at Home,
Had with that lord to battle come.
Harold was born where restless seas
Howl round the storm-swept Orcades;
Where erst St Clairs held princely sway
O'er isle and islet, strait and bay;—
Still nods their palace to its fall,
Thy pride and sorrow, fair Kirkwall!—
Thence oft he mark'd fierce Pentland rave,
As if grim Odin rode her wave;
And watch'd, the whilst, with visage pale,
And throbbing heart, the struggling sail;
For all of wonderful and wild
Had rapture for the lonely child.

XXII.

And much of wild and wonderful
In these rude isles might fancy cull;
For thither came, in times afar,
Stern Lochlin's sons of roving war,
The Norsemen, train'd to spoil and blood,
Skilled to prepare the raven's food;
Kings of the main their leaders brave,
Their barks the dragons of the wave.
And there, in many a stormy vale,
The Scald had told his wondrous tale;
And many a Runic column high
Had witness'd grim idolatry.
And thus had Harold, in his youth,
Learn'd many a Saga's rhyme uncouth,—
Of that Sea-Snake, tremendous curl'd,
Whose monstrous circle girds the world;
Of those dread Maids,⁴⁸ whose hideous yell
Maddens the battle's bloody swell;
Of chiefs, who, guided through the gloom
By the pale death-lights of the tomb,

Ransack'd the graves of warriors old,
 Their falchions wrench'd from corpses' hold,⁴⁹
 Waked the deaf tomb with war's alarms,
 And bade the dead arise to arms!
 With war and wonder all on flame,
 To Roslin's bowers young Harold came,
 Where, by sweet glen and greenwood tree,
 He learn'd a milder minstrelsy;
 Yet something of the Northern spell
 Mix'd with the softer numbers well.

XXIII.

HAROLD.

- "O listen, listen, ladies gay!
 No haughty feat of arms I tell;
 Soft is the note, and sad the lay,
 That mourns the lovely Rosabelle.
- "Moor, moor the barge, ye gallant crew!
 And, gentle ladye, deign to stay!
 Rest thee in Castle Ravensheuch,
 Nor tempt the stormy firth to-day.
- "The blackening wave is edged with white:
 To inch^a and rock the sea-mews fly;
 The fishers have heard the Water-Sprite,
 Whose screams forbode that wreck is nigh.
- "Last night the gifted Seer did view
 A wet shroud swathed round ladye gay;
 Then stay thee, Fair, in Ravensheuch;
 Why cross the gloomy firth to-day?"—
- "'Tis not because Lord Lindesay's heir
 To-night at Roslin leads the ball,
 But that my ladve-mother there
 Sits lonely in her castle-hall.
- "'Tis not because the ring they ride,
 And Lindesay at the ring rides weil,
 But that my sire the wine will chide,
 If 'tis not fill'd by Rosabelle."—
- O'er Roslin all that dreary night,
 A wondrous blaze was seen to gleam;
 'Twas broader than the watch-fire's light,
 And redder than the bright moon-beam.
- It glared on Roslin's castled rock,
 It ruddied all the copse-wood glen;
 'Twas seen from Dryden's groves of oak,
 And seen from cavern'd Hawthornden.

^a Inch, isle.

Seem'd all on fire that chapel proud,
Where Roslin's chiefs uncoffin'd lie,
Each Baron, for a sable shroud,
Sheathed in his iron panoply.

Seem'd all on fire within, around,
Deep sacristy and altar's pale;
Shone every pillar foliage-bound,
And glimmer'd all the dead men's mail.

Blazed battlement and pinnet high,
Blazed every rose-carved buttress fair—
So still they blaze, when fate is nigh
The lordly line of high St Clair.

There are twenty of Roslin's barons bold
Lie buried within that proud chapelle;
Each one the holy vault doth hold—
But the sea holds lovely Rosabelle!

And each St Clair was buried there,
With candle, with book, and with knell;
But the sea-caves rung, and the wild winds sung,
The dirge of lovely Rosabelle.

XXIV.

So sweet was Harold's piteous lay,
Scarce mark'd the guests the darken'd hall,
Though, long before the sinking day,
A wondrous shade involved them all:
It was not eddying mist or fog,
Drain'd by the sun from fen or bog;
Of no eclipse had sages told;
And yet, as it came on apace,
Each one could scarce his neighbour's face,
Could scarce his own stretch'd hand behold.
A secret horror check'd the feast,
And chill'd the soul of every guest;
Even the high Dame stood half aghast,
She knew some evil on the blast;
The elfish page fell to the ground,
And, shuddering, mutter'd, "Found! found! found!"

XXV.

Then sudden, through the darken'd air
A flash of lightning came;
So broad, so bright, so red the glare,
The castle seem'd on flame.
Glanced every rafter of the hall,
Glanced every shield upon the wall;
Each trophied beam, each sculptured stone,
Were instant seen, and instant gone;
Full through the guests' bedazzled band
Resistless flash'd the levin-brand,

And fill'd the hall with smouldering smoke,
 As on the elvish page it broke.
 It broke, with thunder long and loud,
 Dismay'd the brave, appall'd the proud,—
 From sea to sea the larum rung;
 On Berwick wall, and at Carlisle withal,
 To arms the startled warders sprung.
 When ended was the dreadful roar,
 The elvish dwarf was seen no more!

XXVI.

Some heard a voice in Branksome Hall,
 Some saw a sight not seen by all;
 That dreadful voice was heard by some,
 Cry, with loud summons, "GYLBIN, COME!"
 And on the spot where burst the brand,
 Just where the page had flung him down,
 Some saw an arm, and some a hand,
 And some the waving of a gown.
 The guests in silence prayed and shook,
 And terror dimm'd each lofty look.
 But none of all the astonished train
 Was so dismay'd as Deloraine:
 His blood did freeze, his brain did burn,
 'Twas fear'd his mind would ne'er return;
 For he was speechless, ghastly, wan,
 Like him of whom the story ran,
 Who spoke the spectre-hound in Man.
 At length, by fits, he darkly told,
 With broken hint, and shuddering cold—
 That he had seen right certainly,
A shape with amice wrapp'd around,
With a wrought Spanish baldric bound,
Like pilgrim from beyond the sea;
 And knew—but how it matter'd not—
 It was the wizard, Michael Scott.

XXVII.

The anxious crowd, with horror pale,
 All trembling heard the wondrous tale;
 No sound was made, no word was spoke,
 Till noble Angus silence broke;
 And he a solemn sacred plight
 Did to St Bride of Douglas make,⁴⁰
 That he a pilgrimage would take
 To Melrose Abbey, for the sake
 Of Michael's restless sprite.
 Then each, to ease his troubled breast,
 To some bless'd saint his prayers address'd:
 Some to St Modan made their vows,
 Some to St Mary of the Lowes,
 Some to the Holy Rood of Lisle,
 Some to our Ladye of the Isle;
 Each did his patron witness make,
 That he such pilgrimage would take

And monks should sing, and bells should toll,
All for the weal of Michael's soul.
While vows were ta'en, and prayers were pray'd,
'Tis said the noble dame, dismay'd,
Renounced, for aye, dark magic's aid.

XXVIII.

Nought of the bridal will I tell,
Which after in short space befell;
Nor how brave sons and daughters fair
Bless'd Teviot's Flower, and Cranstoun's heir:
After such dreadful scene, 'twere vain
To wake the note of mirth again.
More meet it were to mark the day
Of penitence, and prayer divine,
When pilgrim chiefs, in sad array,
Sought Melrose' holy shrine.

XXIX.

With naked foot, and sackcloth vest,
And arms enfolded on his breast,
Did every pilgrim go;
The standers-by might hear uneath,
Footstep, or voice, or high-drawn breath
Through all the lengthen'd row:
No lordly look, nor martial stride;
Gone was their glory, sunk their pride
Forgotten their renown;
Silent and slow, like ghosts they glide
To the high altar's hallow'd side,
And there they knelt them down:
Above the suppliant chieftains wave
The banners of departed brave;
Beneath the letter'd stones were laid
The ashes of their fathers dead;
From many a garnish'd niche around,
Stern saints and tortured martyrs frown'd.

XXX.

And slow up the dim aisle afar,
With sable cowl and scapular,
And snow-white stoles, in order due,
The holy Fathers, two and two,
In long procession came;
Taper and host, and book they bare,
And holy banner, flourish'd fair
With the Redeemer's name.
Above the prostrate pilgrim band
The mitred Abbot stretch'd his hand,
And bless'd them as they kneel'd;
With holy cross he signed them all,
And pray'd they might be sage in hall,
And fortunate in field.
Then mass was sung, and prayers were said,
And solemn requiem for the dead;

And bells toll'd out their mighty peal,
 For the departed spirit's weal;
 And ever in the office close
 The hymn of intercession rose;
 And far the echoing aisles prolong
 The awful burthen of the song,—
 DIES IRÆ, DIES ILLA,
 SOLVET SÆCLUM IN FAVILLA;
 While the pealing organ rung.
 Were it meet with sacred strain
 To close my lay, so light and vain,
 Thus the holy Fathers sung:—

XXXI.

HYMN FOR THE DEAD.

That day of wrath, that dreadful day,
 When heaven and earth shall pass away!
 What power shall be the sinner's stay?
 How shall he meet that dreadful day?

When, shrivelling like a parched scroll,
 The flaming heavens together roll;
 When louder yet, and yet more dread,
 Swells the high trump that wakes the dead!

Oh! on that day, that wrathful day,
 When man to judgment wakes from clay,
 Be THOU the trembling sinner's stay,
 Though heaven and earth shall pass away!

Hush'd is the harp—the Minstrel gone.
 And did he wander forth alone?
 Alone, in indigence and age,
 To linger out his pilgrimage?
 No!—close beneath proud Newark's tower,
 Arose the Minstrel's lowly bower;
 A simple hut; but there was seen
 The little garden hedged with green,
 The cheerful hearth, and lattice clean.
 There shelter'd wanderers, by the blaze,
 Oft heard the tale of other days;
 For much he loved to ope his door,
 And give the aid he begg'd before.
 So pass'd the winter's day; but still,
 When summer smiled on sweet Bowhill,
 And July's eve, with balmy breath,
 Waved the blue-bells on Newark heath;
 When throstles sung in Hairhead-shaw,
 And corn was green on Carterhaugh,
 And flourish'd, broad, Blackandro's oak,
 The aged Harper's soul awoke!

ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE FIRST EDITION.

It is hardly to be expected, that an Author whom the Public have honoured with some degree of applause, should not be again a trespasser on their kindness. Yet the Author of MARMION must be supposed to feel some anxiety concerning its success, since he is sensible that he hazards, by this second intrusion, any reputation which his first Poem may have procured him. The present story turns upon the private adventures of a fictitious character; but is called a Tale of Flodden Field, because the hero's fate is connected with that memorable defeat, and the causes which led to it. The design of the Author was, if possible, to apprise his readers, at the outset, of the date of his Story, and to prepare them for the manners of the Age in which it is laid. Any Historical Narrative, far more an attempt at Epic composition, exceeded his plan of a Romantic Tale; yet he may be permitted to hope, from the popularity of THE LAY OF THE LAST MINSTREL, that an attempt to paint the manners of the feudal times, upon a broader scale, and in the course of a more interesting story, will not be unacceptable to the Public.

The Poem opens about the commencement of August, and concludes with the defeat of Flodden, 9th September 1513.

ASHESTIEL, 1808.

INTRODUCTION TO MARMION.

EDITION 1830.

WHAT I have to say respecting this Poem may be briefly told. In the Introduction to the "Lay of the Last Minstrel," I have mentioned the circumstances, so far as my literary life is concerned, which induced me to resign the active pursuit of an honourable profession, for the more precarious resources of literature. My appointment to the Sherifdom of Selkirk called for a change of residence. I left, therefore, the pleasant cottage I had upon the side of the Esk, for the "pleasanter banks of the Tweed," in order to comply with the law, which requires that the Sheriff shall be resident, at least during a certain number of months, within his jurisdiction. We found a delightful retirement, by my becoming the tenant of my intimate friend and cousin-german, Colonel Russell, in his mansion of Ashiestiel, which was unoccupied, during his absence on military service in India. The house was adequate to our accommodation, and the exercise of a limited hospitality. The situation is uncommonly beautiful, by the side of a fine river, whose streams are there very favourable for angling, surrounded by the remains of natural woods, and by hills abounding in game. In point of society, according to the heartfelt phrase of Scripture, we dwelt "amongst our own people;" and as the distance from the metropolis was only thirty miles, we were not out of reach of our Edinburgh friends, in which city we spent the terms of the summer and winter Sessions of the Court, that is, five or six months in the year.

An important circumstance had, about the same time, taken place in my life. Hopes had been held out to me from an influential quarter, of a nature to relieve me from the anxiety which I must have otherwise felt, as one upon the precarious tenure of whose own life rested the principal prospects of his family, and especially as one who had necessarily some dependence upon the favour of the public, which is proverbially capricious; though it is but justice to add, that, in my own case, I have not found it so. Mr. Pitt had expressed a wish to my personal friend, the Right Honourable William Dundas, now Lord Clerk Register of Scotland, that some fitting opportunity should be taken to be of service to me; and as my views and wishes pointed to a future

rather than an immediate provision, an opportunity of accomplishing this was soon found. One of the Principal Clerks of Session, as they are called, (official persons who occupy an important and responsible situation, and enjoy a considerable income,) who had served upwards of thirty years, felt himself, from age, and the infirmity of deafness with which it was accompanied, desirous of retiring from his official situation. As the law then stood, such official persons were entitled to bargain with their successors, either for a sum of money, which was usually a considerable one, or for an interest in the emoluments of the office during their life. My predecessor, whose services had been unusually meritorious, stipulated for the emoluments of his office during his life, while I should enjoy the survivorship, on the condition that I discharged the duties of the office in the meantime. Mr. Pitt, however, having died in the interval, his administration was dissolved, and was succeeded by that known by the name of the Fox and Grenville Ministry. My affair was so far completed, that my commission lay in the office subscribed by his Majesty; but, from hurry or mistake, the interest of my predecessor was not expressed in it, as had been usual in such cases. Although, therefore, it only required payment of the fees, I could not in honour take out the commission in the present state, since, in the event of my dying before him, the gentleman whom I succeeded must have lost the vested interest which he had stipulated to retain. I had the honour of an interview with Earl Spencer on the subject, and he, in the most handsome manner, gave directions that the commission should issue as originally intended; adding, that the matter having received the royal assent, he regarded only as a claim of justice what he would have willingly done as an act of favour. I never saw Mr Fox on this, or on any other occasion, and never made any application to him, conceiving that in doing so I might have been supposed to express political opinions contrary to those which I had always professed. In his private capacity, there is no man to whom I would have been more proud to owe an obligation, had I been so distinguished.

By this arrangement I obtained the survivorship of an office, the emoluments of which were fully adequate to my wishes; and as the law respecting the mode of providing for superannuated officers was, about five or six years after, altered from that which admitted the arrangement of assistant and successor, my colleague very handsomely took the opportunity of the alteration, to accept of the retiring annuity provided in such cases, and admitted me to the full benefit of the office.

But although the certainty of succeeding to a considerable income, at the time I obtained it, seemed to assure me of a quiet harbour in my old age, I did not escape my share of inconvenience from the contrary tides and currents by which we are so often encountered in our journey through life. Indeed, the publication of my next poetical attempt was prematurely accelerated, from one of those unpleasant accidents which can neither be foreseen nor avoided.

I had formed the prudent resolution to endeavour to bestow a little more labour than I had yet done on my productions, and to be in no hurry again to announce myself as a candidate for liter-

ary fame. Accordingly, particular passages of a poem, which was finally called "Marmion," were laboured with a good deal of care, by one by whom much care was seldom bestowed. Whether the work was worth the labour or not, I am no competent judge; but I may be permitted to say, that the period of its composition was a very happy one in my life; so much so, that I remember with pleasure, at this moment, some of the spots in which particular passages were composed. It is probably owing to this, that the Introductions to the several Cantos assumed the form of familiar epistles to my intimate friends, in which I alluded, perhaps more than was necessary or graceful, to my domestic occupations and amusements—a loquacity which may be excused by those who remember that I was still young, light-headed, and happy, and that "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."

The misfortunes of a near relation and friend, which happened at this time, led me to alter my prudent determination, which had been, to use great precaution in sending this poem into the world; and made it convenient at least, if not absolutely necessary, to hasten its publication. The publishers of "The Lay of the Last Minstrel," emboldened by the success of that poem, willingly offered a thousand pounds for "Marmion." The transaction being no secret, afforded Lord Byron, who was then at general war with all who blacked paper, an apology for including me in his satire, entitled "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers." I never could conceive how an arrangement between an author and his publishers, if satisfactory to the persons concerned, could afford matter of censure to any third party. I had taken no unusual or ungenerous means of enhancing the value of my merchandise—I had never higgled a moment about the bargain, but accepted at once what I considered the handsome offer of my publishers. These gentlemen, at least, were not of opinion that they had been taken advantage of in the transaction, which, indeed, was one of their own framing; on the contrary, the sale of the Poem was so far beyond their expectation, as to induce them to supply the Author's cellars with what is always an acceptable present to a young Scottish housekeeper, namely, a hogshead of excellent claret.

The Poem was finished in too much haste, to allow me an opportunity of softening down, if not removing, some of its most prominent defects. The nature of Marmion's guilt, although similar instances were found, and might be quoted, as existing in feudal times, was nevertheless not sufficiently peculiar to be indicative of the character of the period, forgery being the crime of a commercial, rather than of a proud and warlike age. This gross defect ought to have been remedied or palliated. Yet I suffered the tree to lie as it had fallen. I remember my friend, Dr Leyden, then in the East, wrote me a furious remonstrance on the subject. I have, nevertheless, always been of opinion, that corrections, however in themselves judicious, have a bad effect—after publication. An author is never so decidedly condemned as on his own confession, and may long find apologists and partisans, until he gives up his own cause. I was not, therefore, inclined to afford matter for censure out of my own admissions; and, by good fortune, the novelty of the subject, and, if I may so say, some force and vivacity of description, were allowed to atone for many

imperfections. Thus the second experiment on the public patience, generally the most perilous,—for the public are then most apt to judge with rigour, what in the first instance they had received, perhaps, with imprudent generosity,—was in my case decidedly successful. I had the good fortune to pass this ordeal favourably, and the return of sales before me makes the copies amount to thirty-six thousand printed between 1808 and 1825, besides a considerable sale since that period. I shall here pause upon the subject of “Marmion,” and, in a few prefatory words to “The Lady of the Lake,” the last poem of mine which obtained eminent success, I will continue the task which I have imposed on myself respecting the origin of my productions.

ABBOTSFORD, *April* 1830.



TWISSEL BRIDGE OVER THE TILL, ACROSS WHICH THE ENGLISH ARMY
ADVANCED TO FLODDEN FIELD.

MARMION.

Introduction to Canto First.

TO WILLIAM STEWART ROSE, Esq.

Ashetiel, Ettrick Forest.

NOVEMBER'S sky is chill and drear,
November's leaf is red and sear :
Late, gazing down the steepy fann,
That hems our little garden in,
Low in its dark and narrow glen,
You scarce the rivulet might ken,
So thick the tangled greenwood grew,
So feeble trill'd the streamlet through :
Now, murmuring hoarse, and frequent seen,
Through bush and brier, no longer green,
An angry brook, it sweeps the glade,
Brawls over rock and wild cascade,
And, foaming brown with doubled speed,
Hurries its waters to the Tweed.

No longer Autumn's glowing red
Upon our Forest hills is shed ;
No more, beneath the evening beam,
Fair Tweed reflects their purple gleam ;
Away hath passed the heather-bell
That bloom'd so rich on Needpath Fell ;
Sallow his brow, and russet bare
Are now the sister-heights of Yair.
The sheep, before the pinching heaven,
To shelter'd dale and down are driven,
Where yet some faded herbage pines,
And yet a watery sunbeam shines :
In meek despondency the eye
The wither'd sward and wintry sky,
And far beneath their summer hill,
Stray sadly by Glenkinnon's rill :
The shepherd shifts his mantle's fold,
And wraps him closer from the cold ;
His dogs no merry circles wheel,
But, shivering, follow at his heel ;
A cowering glance they often cast,
As deeper moans the gathering blast.

My imps, though hardy, bold and wild,
 As best befits the mountain child,
 Feel the sad influence of the hour,
 And wail the daisy's vanished flower
 Their summer gambols tell, and mourn,
 And anxious ask,—Will spring return,
 And birds and lambs again be gay,
 And blossoms clothe the hawthorn spray?

Yes, prattlers, yes. The daisy's flower
 Again shall paint your summer bower;
 Again the hawthorn shall supply
 The garlands you delight to tie;
 The lambs upon the lea shall bound,
 The wild birds carol to the round,
 And while you frolic light as they,
 Too short shall seem the summer day.

To mute and to material things
 New life revolving summer brings;
 The genial call dead Nature hears,
 And in her glory reappears.
 But oh! my country's wintry state
 What second spring shall renovate?
 What powerful call shall bid arise
 The buried warlike and the wise;
 The mind that thought for Britain's weal,
 The hand that grasp'd the victor steel?
 The vernal sun new life bestows
 Even on the meanest flower that blows;
 But vainly, vainly may he shine,
 Where glory weeps o'er NELSON's shrine;
 And vainly pierce the solemn gloom,
 That shrouds, O Prrr, thy hallowed tomb.

Deep graved in every British heart,
 O never let those names depart!
 Say to your sons,—Lo, here his grave,
 Who victor died on Gadite wave;^a
 To him, as to the burning levin,
 Short, bright, resistless course was given.
 Where'er his country's foes were found,
 Was heard the fated thunder's sound,
 Till burst the bolt on yonder shore,
 Roll'd, blazed, destroy'd,—and was no more.

Nor mourn ye less his perish'd worth,
 Who bade the conqueror go forth,
 And launch'd that thunderbolt of war
 On Egypt, Hafnia,^b Trafalgar;
 Who, born to guide such high emprise,
 For Britain's weal was early wise;
 Alas! to whom the Almighty gave,
 For Britain's sins, an early grave!

^a Nelson.^b Copenhagen.

His worth, who, in his mightiest hour,
 A bauble held the pride of power,
 Spurn'd at the sordid lust of pelf,
 And served his Albion for herself;
 Who, when the frantic crowd amain
 Strain'd at subjection's bursting rein,
 O'er their wild mood full conquest gain'd,
 The pride, he would not crush, restrain'd,
 Show'd their fierce zeal a worthier cause,
 And brought the freeman's arm, to aid the freeman's laws.

• Hadst thou but lived, though stripp'd of power,
 A watchman on the lonely tower,
 Thy thrilling trump had roused the land,
 When fraud or danger were at hand;
 By thee, as by the beacon light,
 Our pilots had kept course aright;
 As some proud column, though alone,
 Thy strength had propp'd the tottering throne:
 Now is the stately column broke,
 The beacon-light is quench'd in smoke,
 The trumpet's silver sound is still,
 The warder silent on the hill!

Oh think, how to his latest day,
 When Death, just hovering, claim'd his prey,
 With Palinure's unalter'd mood,
 Firm at his dangerous post he stood;
 Each call for needful rest repell'd,
 With dying hand the rudder held,
 Till in his fall, with fateful sway,
 The steerage of the realm gave way!
 Then, while on Britain's thousand plains,
 One unpolluted church remains,
 Whose peaceful bells ne'er sent around
 The bloody tocsin's maddening sound,
 But still, upon the hallow'd day,
 Convoke the swains to praise and pray;
 While faith and civil peace are dear,
 Grace this cold marble with a tear,—
 He, who preserved them, Prrrr, lies here!

Nor yet suppress the generous sigh,
 Because his rival slumbers nigh;
 Nor be thy *requiescat* dumb,
 Lest it be said o'er Fox's tomb.
 For talents mourn, untimely lost,
 When best employ'd, and wanted most
 Mourn genius high, and lore profound,
 And wit that loved to play, not wound;
 And all the reasoning powers divine,
 To penetrate, resolve, combine;
 And feelings keen, and fancy's glow,—
 They sleep with him who sleeps below:

And, if thou mourn'st they could not save
 From error him who owns this grave,
 Be every harsher thought suppress'd,
 And sacred be the last long rest,
Here, where the end of earthly things
 Lays heroes, patriots, bards, and kings;
 Where stiff the hand, and still the tongue,
 Of those who fought, and spoke, and sung;
Here, where the fretted aisles prolong
 The distant notes of holy song,
 As if some angel spoke agen,
 "All peace on earth, good-will to men;"
 If ever from an English heart,
 O, *here* let prejudice depart,
 And, partial feeling cast aside,
 Record, that Fox a Briton died!
 When Europe crouch'd to France's yoke,
 And Austria bent, and Prussia broke,
 And the firm Russian's purpose brave,
 Was barter'd by a timorous slave,
 Even then dishonour's peace he spurn'd
 The sullied olive-branch return'd,
 Stood for his country's glory fast,
 And nail'd her colours to the mast!
 Heaven, to reward his firmness, gave
 A portion in this honour'd grave,
 And ne'er held marble in its trust
 Of two such wondrous men the dust.

With more than mortal powers endow'd,
 How high they soar'd above the crowd!
 Theirs was no common party race,
 Jostling by dark intrigue for place;
 Like fabled Gods, their mighty war
 Shook realms and nations in its jar;
 Beneath each banner proud to stand,
 Look'd up the noblest of the land,
 Till through the British world were known
 The names of PITT and FOX alone.
 Spells of such force no wizard grave
 E'er framed in dark Thessalian cave,
 Though his could drain the ocean dry,
 And force the planets from the sky.
 These spells are spent, and, spent with these,
 The wine of life is on the lees.
 Genius, and taste, and talent gone,
 For ever tomb'd beneath the stone,
 Where—taming thought to human pride!—
 The mighty chiefs sleep side by side.
 Drop upon FOX's grave the tear,
 'Twill trickle to his rival's bier;
 O'er PITT's the mournful requiem sound,
 And FOX's shall the notes rebound.
 The solemn echo seems to cry,—
 "Here let their discord with them die,

Speak not for those a separate doom,
Whom Fate made brothers in the tomb.
But search the land of living men,
Where wilt thou find their like agen?"

Rest, ardent Spirits! till the cries
Of dying Nature bid you rise;
Not even your Britain's groans can pierce
The leaden silence of your hearse;
Then, O, how impotent and vain
This grateful tributary strain!
Though not unmark'd from northern clime,
Ye heard the Border Minstrel's rhyme:
His Gothic harp has o'er you rung;
The Bard you deign'd to praise, your deathless names
has sung.

Stay yet, illusion, stay a while,
My wilder'd fancy still beguile!
From this high theme how can I part,
Ere half unloaded is my heart!
For all the tears e'er sorrow drew,
And all the raptures fancy knew,
And all the keener rush of blood,
That throbs through bard-like mood,
Were here a tribute mean and low,
Though all their mingled streams could flow --
Woe, wonder, and sensation high,
In one spring-tide of ecstasy! --
It will not be -- it may not last --
The vision of enchantment's past:
Like frostwork in the morning ray,
The fancied fabric melts away;
Each Gothic arch, memorial-stone,
And long, dim, lofty aisle, are gone;
And, lingering last, deception dear,
The choir's high sounds die on my ear.
Now slow return the lonely down,
The silent pastures bleak and brown,
The farm begirt with copsewood wild,
The gambols of each frolic child,
Mixing their shrill cries with the tone
Of Tweed's dark waters rushing on.

Prompt on unequal tasks to run,
Thus nature disciplines her son:
Meeter, she says, for me to stray,
And waste the solitary day,
In plucking from yon fen the reed,
And watch it floating down the Tweed;
Or idly list the shrilling lay,
With which the milkmaid cheers her way,
Marking its cadence rise and fall,
As from the field, beneath her pail,
She trips it down the uneven dale:

Meeter for me, by yonder cairn,
 The ancient shepherd's tale to learn ;
 Though oft he stop in rustic fear,
 Lest his old legends tire the ear
 Of one, who, in his simple mind,
 May boast of book-learn'd taste refined.

But thou, my friend, canst fitly tell,
 (For few have read romance so well,)
 How still the legendary lay
 O'er poet's bosom holds its sway ;
 How on the ancient minstrel strain
 Time lays his palsied hand in vain ;
 And how our hearts at doughty deeds,
 By warriors wrought in steely weeds,
 Still throb for fear and pity's sake ;
 As when the Champion of the Lake
 Enters Morgana's fated house,
 Or in the Chapel Perilous,
 Despising spells and demon's force,
 Holds converse with the unburied corse ;¹
 Or when, Dame Ganore's grace to move,
 (Alas, that lawless was their love !)
 He sought proud Tarquin in his den,
 And freed full sixty knights ; or when,
 A sinful man, and unconfess'd,
 He took the Sangreal's holy quest,
 And, slumbering, saw the vision high,
 He might not view with waking eye.²

The mightiest chiefs of British song
 Scorn'd not such legends to prolong :
 They gleam through Spenser's elfin dream,
 And mix in Milton's heavenly theme ;
 And Dryden, in immortal strain,
 Had raised the Table Round again,³
 But that a ribald King and Court
 Bade him toil on, to make them sport ;
 Demanded for their niggard pay,
 Fit for their souls, a looser lay,
 Licentious satire, song, and play ;
 The world defrauded of the high design,
 Profaned the God-given strength, and marr'd the
 lofty line.

Warm'd by such names, well may we then,
 Though dwindled sons of little men,
 Essay to break a feeble lance
 In the fair fields of old romance ;
 Or seek the moated castle's cell,
 Where long through talisman and spell,

¹ See Note 1 of the "NOTES TO MARMION" in the Appendix. The figures of reference throughout the poem relate to further notes in the Appendix

While tyrants ruled, and damsels wept,
Thy Genius, Chivalry, hath slept:
There sound the harpings of the North,
Till he awake and sally forth,
On venturous quest to prick again,
In all his arms, with all his train,
Shield, lance, and brand, and plume, and scarf,
Pay, giant, dragon, squire, and dwarf,
And wizard with his wand of might,
And errant maid on palfrey white.
Around the Genius weave their spells,
Pure Love, who scarce his passion tells;
Mystery, half veil'd and half reveal'd;
And Honour, with his spotless shield;
Attention, with fix'd eye; and Fear,
That loves the tale she shrinks to hear;
And gentle Courtesy; and Faith,
Unchanged by sufferings, time, or death;
And Valour, lion-mettled lord,
Leaning upon his own good sword.

Well has thy fair achievement shown,
A worthy meed may thus be won;
Ytene's^a oaks—beneath whose shade
Their theme the merry minstrels made,
Of Aspacart, and Bevis bold,⁴
And that Red King,^b who, while of old,
Through Boldrewood the chase he led,
By his lov'd huntsman's arrow bled—
Ytene's oaks have heard again
Renew'd such legendary strain;
For thou hast sung how He of Gaul,
That Amadis so famed in hall,
For Oriana, foil'd in fight
The Necromancer's felon might;
And well in modern verse hast wove
Partenopex's mystic love:
Hear, then, attentive to my lay,
A knightly tale of Albion's elder day.

^a The New Forest in Hampshire, anciently so called.

⁴ William Rufus.

CANTO FIRST.

The Castle.

I.

DAY set on Norham's castled steep,⁵
 And Tweed's fair river, broad and deep,
 And Cheviot's mountains lone:
 The battled towers, the donjon keep,⁶
 The loophole grates, where captives weep,
 The flanking walls that round it sweep,
 In yellow lustre shone.
 The warriors on the turrets high,
 Moving athwart the evening sky,
 Seem'd forms of giant height:
 Their armour, as it caught the rays,
 Flash'd back again the western blaze,
 In lines of dazzling light.

II.

Saint George's banner, broad and gay,
 Now faded, as the fading ray
 Less bright, and less, was flung;
 The evening gale had scarce the power
 To wave it on the Donjon Tower,
 So heavily it hung.
 The scouts had parted on their search,
 The Castle gates were barr'd;
 Above the gloomy portal arch,
 Timing his footsteps to a march,
 The Warder kept his guard;
 Low humming, as he paced along,
 Some ancient Border gathering song.

III.

A distant trampling sound he hears;
 He looks abroad and soon appears,
 O'er Horncliff-hill a plump^a of spears,
 Beneath a pennon gay;
 A horseman, darting from the crowd,
 Like lightning from a summer cloud,
 Spurs on his mettled courser proud,
 Before the dark array.

^a This word properly applies to a flight of water-fowl; but is applied, by analogy, to a body of horse:—

"There is a knight of the North Country,
 Which leads a lusty *plump* of spears."—*Flodden*.

Beneath the sable palisade,
That closed the Castle barricade,
His bugle-horn he blew;
The warder hasted from the wall,
And warn'd the Captain in the hall,
For well the blast he knew;
And joyfully that knight did call,
To sewer, squire, and seneschal.

IV.

"Now broach ye a pipe of Malvoisie,
Bring pasties of the doe,
And quickly make the entrance free,
And bid my heralds ready be,
And every minstrel sound his glee,
And all our trumpets blow;
And, from the platform, spare ye not
To fire a noble salvo-shot;
Lord MARMION waits below!"
Then to the Castle's lower ward
Sped forty yeomen tall,
The iron-studded gates unbarr'd,
Raised the portcullis' ponderous guard,
The lofty palisade unspar'd,
And let the drawbridge fall.

V.

Along the bridge Lord Marmion rode.
Proudly his red-roan charger trode,
His helm hung at the saddlebow;
Well by his visage you might know
He was a stalworth knight, and keen,
And had in many a battle been.
The scar on his brown cheek reveal'd
A token true of Bosworth field;
His eyebrow dark, and eye of fire,
Show'd spirit proud, and prompt to ire;
Yet lines of thought upon his cheek
Did deep design and counsel speak.
His forehead, by his casque worn bare,
His thick mustache, and curly hair,
Coal black, and grizzled here and there,
But more through toil than age;
His square-turn'd joints, and strength of limb,
Show'd him no carpet knight so trim,
But in close fight a champion grim,
In camps a leader sage.

VI.

Well was he arm'd from head to heel,
In mail and plate of Milan steel;⁷
But his strong helm, of mighty cost,
Was all with burnish'd gold emboss'd;
Amid the plumage of the crest,
A falcon hover'd on her nest,
With wings outspread, and forward breast:

E'en such a falcon, on his shield,
 Soar'd sable in an azure field:
 The golden legend bore aright,
~~Who~~ ^{Who} checks at me, to death is dight.^e
 Blue was the charger's broider'd rein;
 Blue ribbons deck'd his arching mane;
 The knightly housing's ample fold
 Was velvet blue, and trapp'd with gold.

VII.

Behind him rode two gallant squires,
 Of noble name, and knightly sires;
 They burn'd the gilded spurs to claim;
 For well could each a war-horse tame,
 Could draw the bow, the sword could sway
 And lightly bear the ring away;
 Nor less with courteous precepts stored,
 Could dance in hall, and carve at board,
 And frame love-ditties passing rare,
 And sing them to a lady fair.

VIII.

Four men-at-arms came at their backs,
 With halbert, bill, and battle-axe:
 They bore Lord Marmion's lance so strong,
 And led his sumpter-mules along,
 And ambling palfrey, when at need
 Him listed ease his battle-steed.
 The last and trustiest of the four,
 On high his forky pennon bore;
 Like swallow's tail, in shape and hue,
 Flutter'd the streamer glossy blue,
 Where, blazon'd sable, as before,
 The towering falcon seem'd to soar.
 Last, twenty yeomen, two and two,
 In hosen black, and jerkins blue,
 With falcons broider'd on each breast,
 Attended on their lord's behest:
 Each, chosen for an archer good,
 Knew hunting-craft by lake or wood;
 Each one a six-foot bow could bend,
 And far a cloth-yard shaft could send;
 Each held a boar-spear tough and strong,
 And at their belts their quivers rung.
 Their dusty palfreys, and array,
 Show'd they had march'd a weary way.

IX.

'Tis meet that I should tell you now,
 How fairly arm'd, and order'd how,
 The soldiers of the guard,
 With musket, pike, and morion,
 To welcome noble Marmion,
 Stood in the Castle-yard;

Minstrels and trumpeters were there,
The gunner held his linstock yare,
For welcome-shot prepared :
Enter'd the train, and such a clang,
As then through all his turrets rang,
Old Norham never heard.

X.

The guards their morrice-pikes advanced,
The trumpets flourish'd brave,
The cannon from the ramparts glanced,
And thundering welcome gave.
A blithe salute, in martial sort,
The minstrels well might sound,
For, as Lord Marmion cross'd the court,
He scatter'd angels round.
"Welcome to Norham, Marmion !
Stout heart, and open hand !
Well dost thou brook thy gallant roan,
Thou flower of English land !"

XI.

Two pursuivants, whom tabarts deck,
With silver scutcheon round their neck,
Stood on the steps of stone,
By which you reach the donjon gate,
And there, with herald pomp and state,
They hail'd Lord Marmion :
They hail'd him Lord of Fontenaye,
Of Lutterward, and Scrivelbaye,
Of Tamworth tower and town ;^a
And he, their courtesy to requite,
Gave them a chain of twelve marks' weight,
All as he lighted down.
"Now, largesse, largesse," Lord Marmion,
Knight of the crest of gold !
A blazon'd shield, in battle won,
Ne'er guarded heart so bold."

XII.

They marshall'd him to the Castle-hall,
Where the guests stood all aside,
And loudly flourish'd the trumpet-call
And the heralds loudly cried,—
"Room, lordings, room for Lord Marmion,
With the crest and helm of gold !
Full well we know the trophies won
In the lists at Cottiswold :
There, vainly Ralph de Wilton strove
'Gainst Marmion's force to stand ;
To him he lost his lady-love,
And to the King his land.

^a The cry with which heralds and pursuivants were wont to acknowledge the bounty received from the knights.

Ourselves beheld the listed field,
 A sight both sad and fair;
 We saw Lord Marmion pierce his shield,
 And saw his saddle bare;
 We saw the victor win the crest
 He wears with worthy pride;
 And on the gibbet-tree, reversed,
 His foeman's scutcheon tied.
 Place, nobles, for the Falcon-Knight!
 Room, room, ye gentles gay,
 For him who conquer'd in the right,
 Marmion of Fontenaye!"

XIII.

Then stepp'd to meet that noble Lord,
 Sir Hugh the Heron bold,
 Baron of Twisell, and of Ford,
 And Captain of the Hold.¹⁰
 He led Lord Marmion to the deas,
 Raised o'er the pavement high,
 And placed him in the upper place—
 They feasted full and high:
 The whiles a Northern harper rude
 Chanted a rhyme of deadly feud,
*"How the fierce Thirwalls, and Riddleys all,
 Stout Willimondswick,
 And Hardriding Dick,
 And Hughie of Hawdon, and Will o' the Wall,
 Have set on Sir Albany Featherstonhaugh,
 And taken his life at the Deadman's-shaw."*
 Scantly Lord Marmion's ear could brook
 The harper's barbarous lay;
 Yet much he praised the pains he took,
 And well those pains did pay:
 For lady's suit and minstrel's strain,
 By knight should ne'er be heard in vain.

XIV.

"Now, good Lord Marmion," Heron says,
 "Of your fair courtesy,
 I pray you bide some little space,
 In this poor tower with me.
 Here may you keep your arms from rust,
 May breathe your war-horse well;
 Seldom hath past a week but giust
 Or feat of arms befell:
 The Scots can rein a mettled steed,
 And love to couch a spear;—
 St George! a stirring life they lead,
 That have such neighbours near.
 Then stay with us a little space,
 Our northern wars to learn;
 I pray you for your lady's grace!"—
 Lord Marmion's brow grew stern.

XV.

The Captain mark'd his alter'd look,
And gave a squire the sign;
A mighty wassail-bowl he took,
And crown'd it high in wine.
"Now pledge me here, Lord Marmion:
But first I pray thee fair,
Where hast thou left that page of thine,
That used to serve thy cup of wine,
Whose beauty was so rare?
When last in Raby towers we met,
The boy I closely eyed,
And often mark'd his cheeks were wet,
With tears he fain would hide:
His was no rugged horse-boy's hand,
To burnish shield or sharpen brand,
Or saddle battle-steed;
But meeter seem'd for lady fair,
To fan her cheek or curl her hair,
Or through embroidery rich and rare,
The slender silk to lead:
His skin was fair, his ringlets gold,
His bosom—when he sigh'd,
The russet doublet's rugged fold
Could scarce repel its pride!
Say, hast thou given that lovely youth
To serve in lady's bower?
Or was the gentle page, in sooth,
A gentle paramour?"

XVI.

Lord Marmion ill could brook such jest;
He roll'd his kindling eye,
With pain his rising wrath suppress'd,
Yet made a calm reply:
"That boy thou thoughtst so goodly fair,
He might not brook the northern air.
More of his fate if thou wouldst learn,
I left him sick in Lindisfarn:^a
Enough of him.—But, Heron, say,
Why does thy lovely lady gay
Disdain to grace the hall to-day?
Or has that dame, so fair and sage,
Gone on some pious pilgrimage?"
He spoke in covert scorn, for fame
Whisper'd light tales of Heron's dame.

XVII.

Unmark'd, at least unreck'd, the taunt,
Careless the knight replied,
"No bird, whose feathers gaily flaunt,
Delights in cage to bide:

^a See Note 24.

Norham is grim and grated close,
 Hemm'd in by battlement and fosse.
 And many a darksome tower ;
 And better loves my lady bright
 To sit in liberty and light,
 In fair Queen Margaret's bower.
 We hold our greyhound in our hand,
 Our falcon on our glove ;
 But where shall we find leash or band,
 For dame that loves to rove ?
 Let the wild falcon soar her swing,
 She'll stoop when she has tired her wing."—

XVIII.

"Nay, if with royal James's bride
 The lovely Lady Heron bide,
 Behold me here a messenger,
 Your tender greetings prompt to bear ;
 For, to the Scottish court address'd,
 I journey at our King's behest,
 And pray you, of your grace, provide
 For me and mine, a trusty guide.
 I have not ridden in Scotland since
 James back'd the cause of that mock prince,
 Warbeck, that Flemish counterfeit,
 Who on the gibbet paid the cheat.
 Then did I march with Surrey's power,
 What time we razed old Aytoun Tower."—11

XIX.

"For such-like need, my lord, I trow,
 Norham can find you guides enow ;
 For here be some have prick'd as far,
 On Scottish ground, as to Dunbar ;
 Have drunk the monks of St Bothan's ale,
 And driven the beeves of Lauderdale ;
 Harried the wives of Greenlaw's goods,
 And given them light to set their hoods."—12

XX.

"Now, in good sooth," Lord Marmion cried,
 "Were I in warlike wise to ride,
 A better guard I would not lack,
 Than your stout forayers at my back ;
 But, as in form of peace I go,
 A friendly messenger, to know
 Why through all Scotland, near and far,
 Their King is mustering troops for war,
 The sight of plundering Border spears
 Might justify suspicious fears,
 And deadly feud, or thirst of spoil,
 Break out in some unseemly broil :
 A herald were my fitting guide ;
 Or Friar, sworn in peace to bide

Or pardoner, or travelling priest,
Or strolling pilgrim, at the least."

XXI.

The Captain mused a little space,
And pass'd his hand across his face.—
"Fain would I find the guide you want,
But ill may spare a pursuivant,
The only men that safe can ride
Mine errands on the Scottish side:
And though a bishop built this fort,
Few holy brethren here resort;
Even our good chaplain, as I ween,
Since our last siege we have not seen:
The mass he might not sing or say,
Upon one stinted meal a-day;
So, safe he sat in Durham aisle,
And pray'd for our success the while.
Our Norham vicar, woe betide,
Is all too well in case to ride.
The priest of Shoreswood¹³—he could rein
The wildest war-horse in your train;
But then, no spearman in the hall
Will sooner swear, or stab, or brawl.
Friar John of Tilmouth were the man:
A blithesome brother at the can,
A welcome guest in hall and bower,
He knows each castle, town, and tower,
In which the wine and ale is good,
'Twixt Newcastle and Holy-Rood.
But that good man, as ill befalls,
Hath seldom left our castle walls,
Since, on the vigil of St Bede,
In evil hour, he cross'd the Tweed,
To teach Dame Alison her creed.
Old Bughtrig found him with his wife;
And John, an enemy to strife,
Sans frock and hood, fled for his life.
The jealous churl hath deeply swore,
That, if again he venture o'er,
He shall shrieve penitent no more.
Little he loves such risks, I know;
Yet, in your guard, perchance will go."

XXII.

Young Selby, at the fair hall-board,
Carved to his uncle and that lord,
And reverently took up the word.—
"Kind uncle, woe were we each one,
If harm should hap to brother John.
He is a man of mirthful speech,
Can many a game and gambol teach,
Full well at tables can he play,
And sweep at bowls the stake away,

None can a lustier carol bawl,
 The needfulest among us all,
 When time hangs heavy in the hall,
 And snow comes thick at Christmas tide,
 And we can neither hunt, nor ride
 A foray on the Scottish side.
 The vow'd revenge of Bughtrig rude,
 May end in worse than loss of hood.
 Let friar John, in safety, still
 In chimney-corner snore his fill,
 Roast hissing crabs, or flagons swill :
 Last night, to Norham there came one,
 Will better guide Lord Marmion."—
 "Nephew," quoth Heron, "by my fay,
 Well hast thou spoke; say forth thy say."—

XXIII.

"Here is a holy Palmer come,
 From Salem first, and last from Rome;
 One, that hath kiss'd the blessed tomb,
 And visited each holy shrine,
 In Araby and Palestine;
 On hills of Armenie hath been,
 Where Noah's ark may yet be seen;
 By that Red Sea, too, hath he trod,
 Which parted at the prophet's rod;
 In Sinai's wilderness he saw
 The Mount, where Israel heard the law,
 'Mid thunder-dint and flashing levin,
 And shadows, mists, and darkness, given.
 He shows St James's cockle-shell;
 Of fair Montserrat, too, can tell;
 And of that Grot where Olives nod,
 Where, darling of each heart and eye,
 From all the youth of Sicily,
 Saint Rosalie retired to God."¹⁴

XXIV.

"To stout Saint George of Norwich merry,
 Saint Thomas, too, of Canterbury,
 Cuthbert of Durham and Saint Bede,
 For his sins' pardon hath he pray'd.
 He knows the passes of the North,
 And seeks far shrines beyond the Forth;
 Little he eats, and long will wake,
 And drinks but of the stream or lake.
 This were a guide o'er moor and dale;
 But, when our John hath quaff'd his ale,
 As little as the wind that blows,
 And warms itself against his nose,
 Kens he, or cares, which way he goes."—

XXV.

"Gramercy!" quoth Lord Marmion,
 "Full loth were I that Friar John,

That venerable man, for me
 Were placed in fear or jeopardy.
 If this same Palmer will me lead
 From hence to Holy-Rood,
 Like his good saint, I'll pay his meed,
 Instead of cockle-shell, or bead,
 With angels fair and good.
 I love such holy rambles ; still
 They know to charm a weary hill,
 With song, romance, or lay :
 Some jovial tale, or glee, or jest,
 Some lying legend, at the least,
 They bring to cheer the way."—

XXVI.

"Ah ! noble sir," young Selby said,
 And finger on his lip he laid,
 "This man knows much—perchance e'en more
 Than he could learn by holy lore.
 Still to himself he's muttering,
 And shrinks as at some unseen thing.
 Last night we listen'd at his cell ;
 Strange sounds we heard, and, sooth to tell,
 He murmur'd on till morn, howe'er
 No living mortal could be near.
 Sometimes I thought I heard it plain,
 As other voices spoke again.
 I cannot tell—I like it not—
 Friar John hath told us it is wrote,
 No conscience clear, and void of wrong,
 Can rest awake, and pray so long.
 Himself still sleeps before his beads
 Have mark'd ten aves, and two creeds.—" 15

XXVII.

"Let pass," quoth Marmion ; "by my fay,
 This man shall guide me on my way,
 Although the great arch-fiend and he
 Had sworn themselves of company.
 So please you, gentle youth, to call
 This Palmer¹⁶ to the Castle-hall."
 The summon'd Palmer came in place ;
 His sable cowl o'erhung his face ;
 In his black mantle was he clad,
 With Peter's keys, in cloth of red,
 On his broad shoulders wrought ;
 The scallop-shell his cap did deck ;
 The crucifix around his neck
 Was from Loretto brought ;
 His sandals were with travel tore,
 Staff, budget, bottle, scrip, he wore ;
 The faded palm-branch in his hand
 Show'd pilgrim from the Holy Land.

XXVIII.

When as the Palmer came in hall,
Nor lord, nor knight, was there more tall,
Or had a statelier step withal,

Or look'd more high and keen;
For no saluting did he wait,
But strode across the hall of state,
And fronted Marmion where he sate,
As he his peer had been.

But his gaunt frame was worn with toil;
His cheek was sunk, alas the while!

And when he struggled at a smile,
His eye look'd haggard wild:
Poor wretch! the mother that him bare,
If she had been in presence there,
In his wan face, and sun-burn'd hair,
She had not known her child.

Danger, long travel, want, or woe,
Soon change the form that best we know--
For deadly fear can time outgo,

And blanch at once the hair;
Hard toil can roughen form and face,
And want can quench the eye's bright grace,
Nor does old age a wrinkle trace

More deeply than despair.
Happy whom none of these befall,
But this poor Palmer knew them all.

XXIX.

Lord Marmion then his boon did ask;
The Palmer took on him the task,
So he would march with morning tide,
To Scottish court to be his guide.

"But I have solemn vows to pay,
And may not linger by the way,
To fair St Andrews bound,
Within the ocean-cave to pray,
Where good Saint Rule his holy lay,
From midnight to the dawn of day,
Sung to the billows' sound;¹⁷
Thence to Saint Fillan's blessed well,
Whose spring can frenzied dreams dispel,
And the crazed brain restore:¹⁸
Saint Mary grant, that cave or spring
Could back to peace my bosom bring,
Or bid it throb no more!"

XXX.

And now the midnight draught of sleep,
Where wine and spices richly steep,
In massive bowl of silver deep,
The page presents on knee.
Lord Marmion drank a fair good rest,

The Captain pledged his noble guest,
The cup went through among the rest,
Who drain'd it merrily;
Alone the Palmer pass'd it by,
Though Selby press'd him courteously.
This was a sign the feast was o'er;
It hush'd the merry wassel roar,
The minstrels ceased to sound.
Soon in the Castle nought was heard,
But the slow footstep of the guard,
Pacing his sober round.

XXXI.

With early dawn Lord Marmion rose:
And first the chapel doors unclosed;
Then, after morning rites were done,
(A hasty mass from Friar John,)
And knight and squire had broke their fast
On rich substantial repast,
Lord Marmion's bugles blew to horse:
Then came the stirrup-cup in course:
Between the Baron and his host,
No point of courtesy was lost;
High thanks were by Lord Marmion paid.
Solemn excuse the Captain made,
Till, filing from the gate, had pass'd
That noble train, their Lord the last.
Then loudly rung the trumpet call;
Thunder'd the cannon from the wall,
And shook the Scottish shore;
Around the castle eddied slow,
Volumes of smoke as white as snow,
And hid its turrets hoar;
Till they roll'd forth upon the air,
And met the river breezes there,
Which gave again the prospect fair.

Introduction to Canto Second.

TO THE REV. JOHN MARRIOTT, A.M.

Ashestiel, Ettrick Forest.

THE scenes are desert now, and bare,
Where flourish'd once a forest fair,¹⁰
When these waste glens with copse were lined,
And peopled with the hart and hind.
Yon Thorn—perchance whose prickly spears
Have fenced him for three hundred years,
While fell around his green compeers—
Yon lonely Thorn, would he could tell
The changes of his parent dell,
Since he, so grey and stubborn now,
Waved in each breeze a sapling bough;
Would he could tell how deep the shade
A thousand mingled branches made;
How broad the shadows of the oak,
How clung the rowan^a to the rock,
And through the foliage show'd his head,
With narrow leaves and berries red;
What pines on every mountain sprung,
O'er every dell what birches hung,
In every breeze what aspens shook,
What alders shaded every brook!

"Here, in my shade," methinks he'd say,
"The mighty stag at noon-tide lay:
The wolf I've seen, a fiercer game,
(The neighbouring dingle bears his name),
With lurching step around me prowled,
And stop, against the moon to howl;
The mountain-boar, on battle set,
His tusks upon my stem would whet;
While doe, and roe, and red-deer good,
Have bounded by, through gay green-wood.
Then oft, from Newark's riven tower,
Sallied a Scottish monarch's power:
A thousand vassals muster'd round,
With horse, and hawk, and horn, and hound;
And I might see the youth intent,
Guard every pass with crossbow bent;
And through the brake the rangers stalk,
And fal'ners hold the ready hawk;
And foresters in green-wood trim,
Lead in the leash the gazehounds grim,
Attentive as the bratchet's^b bay,
From the dark covert drove the prey,
To slip them as he broke away.

^a Mountain ash.

^b Slowhound.

The startled quarry bounds amain,
 As fast the gallant greyhounds strain;
 Whistles the arrow from the bow,
 Answers the harquebuss below;
 While all the rocking hills reply,
 To hoof-clang, hound, and hunter's cry,
 And bugles ringing lightsomely."

Of such proud huntings, many tales
 Yet linger in our lonely dales,
 Up pathless Ettrick and on Yarrow,
 Where erst the outlaw drew his arrow.
 But not more blithe that silvan court,
 Than we have been at humbler sport;
 Though small our pomp, and mean our game,
 Our mirth, dear Marriott, was the same.
 Remember'st thou my greyhounds true?
 O'erholt or hill there never flew,
 From slip or leash there never sprang,
 More fleet of foot, or sure of fang.
 Nor dull, between each merry chase,
 Pass'd by the intermitted space;
 For we had fair resource in store,
 In Classic and in Gothic lore:
 We mark'd each memorable scene,
 And held poetic talk between;
 Nor hill, nor brook, we paced along,
 But had its legend or its song.
 All silent now—for now are still
 Thy bowers, untenanted Bowhill!^a
 No longer, from thy mountains dun,
 The yeoman hears the well-known gun,
 And while his honest heart glows warm,
 At thought of his paternal farm,
 Round to his mates a brimmer fills,
 And drinks, "The Chieftain of the Hills!"
 No fairy forms, in Yarrow's bowers,
 Trip o'er the walks, or tend the flowers,
 Fair as the elves whom Janet saw
 By moonlight dance on Carterhaugh;
 No youthful Baron's left to grace
 The Forest-Sheriff's lonely chase,
 And ape, in manly step and tone,
 The majesty of Oberon:
 And she is gone, whose lovely face
 Is but her least and lowest grace;^b
 Though if to Sylphid Queen 'twere given,
 To show our earth the charms of Heaven,
 She could not glide along the air,
 With form more light, or face more fair.
 No more the widow's deafen'd ear
 Grows quick that lady's step to hear:

^a A seat of the Duke of Buccleuch on the Yarrow.

^b Harriet, Countess of Dalkeith, afterwards Duchess of Buccleuch.

At noontide she expects her not,
Nor busies her to trim the cot;
Pensive she turns her humming wheel,
Or pensive cooks her orphans' meal;
Yet blesses, ere she deals their bread,
The gentle hand by which they're fed.

From Yair,—which hills so closely bind,
Scarce can the Tweed his passage find,
Though much he fret, and chafe, and toil,
Till all his eddying currents boil,—
Her long-descended lord^a is gone,
And left us by the stream alone.
And much I miss those sportive boys,^b
Companions of my mountain joys,
Just at the age 'twixt boy and youth,
When thought is speech, and speech is truth.
Close to my side, with what delight
They press'd to hear of Wallace wight,
When, pointing to his airy mound,
I call'd his ramparts holy ground!
Kindled their brows to hear me speak;
And I have smiled, to feel my cheek,
Despite the difference of our years,
Return again the glow of theirs.
Ah, happy boys! such feelings pure^c read,
They will not, cannot, long endure;
Condemn'd to stem the world's rude tide
You may not linger by the side;
For Fate shall thrust you from the shore,
And Passion ply the sail and oar.
Yet cherish the remembrance still,
Of the lone mountain, and the rill;
For trust, dear boys, the time will come,
When fiercer transport shall be dumb,
And you will think right frequently,
But, well I hope, without a sigh,
On the free hours that we have spent
Together, on the brown hill's bent.

When, musing on companions gone,
We doubly feel ourselves alone,
Something, my friend, we yet may gain;
There is a pleasure in this pain:
It soothes the love of lonely rest,
Deep in each gentler heart impress'd.
'Tis silent amid wordly toils,
And stifled soon by mental broils;
But, in a bosom thus prepared,
Its still small voice is often heard,

^a The late Alexander Pringle, Esq. of Whytbank.

^b The sons of Mr Pringle of Whytbank.

^c On a high mountainous ridge above the farm of Ashestiel is a fosse called Wallace's Trench.

Whispering a mingled sentiment,
 'Twixt resignation and content.
 Oft in my mind such thoughts awake,
 By lone Saint Mary's silent lake;²⁰
 Thou know'st it well,—nor fen, nor sedge,
 Pollute the pure lake's crystal edge;
 Abrupt and sheer, the mountains sink
 At once upon the level brink;
 And just a trace of silver sand
 Marks where the water meets the land.
 Far in the mirror, bright and blue,
 Each hill's huge outline you may view;
 Shaggy with heath, but lonely bare,
 Nor tree, nor bush, nor brake, is there,
 Save where, of land, yon slender line
 Bears thwart the lake the scatter'd pine.
 Yet even this nakedness has power,
 And aids the feeling of the hour:
 Nor thicket, dell, nor copse you spy,
 Where living thing concealed might lie;
 Nor point, retiring, hides a dell,
 Where swain, or woodman lone, might dwell;
 There's nothing left to fancy's guess,
 You see that all is loneliness:
 And silence aids—though the steep hills
 Send to the lake a thousand rills;
 In summer tide, so soft they weep,
 The sound but lulls the ear asleep;
 Your horse's hoof-tread sounds too rude,
 So stillly is the solitude.

Nought living meets the eye or ear,
 But well I ween the dead are near;
 For though, in feudal strife, a foe
 Hath laid Our Lady's chapel low,²¹
 Yet still, beneath the hallow'd soil,
 The peasant rests him from his toil,
 And, dying, bids his bones be laid,
 Where erst his simple fathers pray'd.

If age had tamed the passions' strife,
 And fate had cut my ties to life,
 Here, have I thought, 'twere sweet to dwell,
 And rear again the chaplain's cell,
 Like that same peaceful hermitage,
 Where Milton long'd to spend his age.
 'Twere sweet to mark the setting day
 On Bourhope's lonely top decay;
 And, as it faint and feeble died
 On the broad lake, and mountain's side,
 To say, "Thus pleasures fade away;
 Youth, talents, beauty, thus decay,
 And leave us dark, forlorn, and grey;"
 Then gaze on Dryhope's ruin'd tower,
 And think on Yarrow's faded Flower:

And when that mountain-sound I heard,
 Which bids us be for storm prepared,
 The distant rustling of his wings,
 As up his force the Tempest brings,
 'T were sweet, ere yet his terrors rave,
 To sit upon the Wizard's grave—
 That Wizard-Priest's, whose bones are thrust
 From company of holy dust;²²
 On which no sunbeam ever shines—
 (So superstition's creed divines)—
 Thence view the lake, with sullen roar,
 Heave her broad billows to the shore;
 And mark the wild swans mount the gale,
 Spread wide through mist their snowy sail,
 And ever stoop again, to lave
 Their bosoms on the surging wave:
 Then, when against the driving hail
 No longer might my plaid avail,
 Back to my lonely home retire,
 And light my lamp, and trim my fire;
 There ponder o'er some mystic lay,
 Till the wild tale had all its sway,
 And, in the bittern's distant shriek,
 I heard unearthly voices speak,
 And thought the Wizard-Priest was come,
 To claim again his ancient home!
 And bade my busy fancy range,
 To frame him fitting shape and strange,
 Till from the task my brow I clear'd,
 And smiled to think that I had fear'd.

But chief, 't were sweet to think such life,
 (Though but escape from fortune's strife,)
 Something most matchless good and wise,
 A great and grateful sacrifice;
 And deem each hour to musing given,
 A step upon the road to heaven.

Yet him, whose heart is ill at ease,
 Such peaceful solitudes displease:
 He loves to drown his bosom's jar
 Amid the elemental war:
 And my black Palmer's choice had been
 Some ruder and more savage scene,
 Like that which frowns round dark Loch-skene.²³
 There eagles scream from isle to shore;
 Down all the rocks the torrents roar;
 O'er the black waves incessant driven,
 Dark mists infect the summer heaven;
 Through the rude barriers of the lake,
 Away its hurrying waters break,
 Faster and whiter dash and curl,
 Till down yon dark abyss they hurl.
 Rises the fog-smoke white as snow,
 Thunders the viewless stream below

Diving, as if condemn'd to lave
Some demon's subterranean cave,
Who, prison'd by enchanter's spell,
Shakes the dark rock with groan and yell.
And well that Palmer's form and mien
Had suited with the stormy scene,
Just on the edge, straining his ken
To view the bottom of the den,
Where, deep deep down, and far within,
Toils with the rocks the roaring linn;
Then, issuing forth one foamy wave,
And wheeling round the Giant's Grave,
White as the snowy charger's tail
Drives down the pass of Moffatdale.

Marriott, thy harp, on Isis strung,
To many a Border theme has rung:
Then list to me, and thou shalt know
Of this mysterious Man of Woe.

CANTO SECOND.

The Content.

I.

THE breeze, which swept away the smoke,
Round Norham Castle roll'd,
When all the loud artillery spoke,
With lightning-flash, and thunder stroke,
As Marmion left the Hold.
It curl'd not Tweed alone, that breeze,
For, far upon Northumbrian seas,
It freshly blew, and strong,
Where, from high Whitby's cloister'd pile,
Bound to St Guthbert's Holy Isle,²⁴
It bore a bark along.
Upon the gale she stoop'd her side,
And bounded o'er the swelling tide,
As she were dancing home;
The merry seamen laugh'd, to see
Their gallant ship so lustily
Furrow the green sea-foam.
Much joy'd they in their honour'd freight
For, on the deck, in chair of state,
The Abbess of Saint Hilda placed
With five fair nuns, the galley graced.

II.

'Twas sweet to see these holy maids,
Like birds escaped to greenwood shades,
Their first flight from the cage,
How timid, and how curious too,
For all to them was strange and new,
And all the common sights they view,
Their wonderment engage.
One eyed the shrouds and swelling sail,
With many a benedicite;
One at the rippling surge grew pale,
And would for terror pray;
Then shriek'd, because the sea-dog nigh,
His round black head, and sparkling eye,
Rear'd o'er the foaming spray;
And one would still adjust her veil,
Disorder'd by the summer gale,
Perchance lest some more worldly eye
Her dedicated charms might spy;
Perchance, because such action graced
Her fair-turn'd arm and slender waist.
Light was each simple bosom there,
Save two, who ill might pleasure share,—
The Abbess, and the Novice Clare.

III.

The Abbess was of noble blood,
But early took the veil and hood,
Ere upon life she cast a look,
Or knew the world that she forsook.
Fair too she was, and kind had been
As she was fair, but ne'er had seen
For her a timid lover sigh,
Nor knew the influence of her eye.
Love, to her ear, was but a name,
Combined with vanity and shame;
Her hopes, her fears, her joys, were all
Bounded within the cloister wall:
The deadliest sin her mind could reach.
Was of monastic rule the breach;
And her ambition's highest aim
To emulate Saint Hilda's fame.
For this she gave her ample dower,
To raise the convent's eastern tower;
For this, with carving rare and quaint,
She deck'd the chapel of the saint,
And gave the relic-shrine of cost,
With ivory and gems emboss'd.
The poor her Convent's bounty blest,
The pilgrim in its halls found rest.

IV.

Black was her garb, her rigid rule
Reform'd on Benedictine school;

Her cheek was pale, her form was spare;
Vigils, and penitence austere,
Had early quench'd the light of youth,
But gentle was the dame, in sooth;
Though vain of her religious sway,
She loved to see her maids obey;
Yet nothing stern was she in cell,
And the nuns loved their Abbess well.
Sad was this voyage to the dame;
Summon'd to Lindisfarne, she came,
There, with Saint Cuthbert's Abbot old,
And Tynemouth's Prioress, to hold
A chapter of Saint Benedict,
For inquisition stern and strict,
On two apostates from the faith,
And, if need were, to doom to death.

V.

Nought say I here of Sister Clare,
Save this, that she was young and fair;
As yet a novice unprofess'd,
Lovely and gentle, but distress'd.
She was betroth'd to one now dead,
Or worse, who had dishonour'd fled.
Her kinsmen bade her give her hand
To one, who loved her for her land:
Herself, almost heart-broken now,
Was bent to take the vestal vow,
And shroud, within Saint Hilda's gloom,
Her blasted hopes and wither'd bloom.

VI.

She sate upon the galley's prow,
And seem'd to mark the waves below;
Nay, seem'd, so fix'd her look and eye,
To count them as they glided by.
She saw them not—'twas seeming all—
Far other scene her thoughts recall,—
A sun-scorch'd desert, waste and bare,
Nor waves, nor breezes, murmur'd there;
There saw she—where some careless hand
O'er a dead corpse had heap'd the sand,
To hide it till the jackals come,
To tear it from the scanty tomb.—
See what a woful look was given,
As she raised up her eyes to heaven!

VII.

Lovely, and gentle, and distress'd—
These charms might tame the fiercest breast;
Harpers have sung, and poets told,
That he, in fury uncontroll'd,
The shaggy monarch of the wood,
Before a virgin, fair and good,
Hath pacified his savage mood

But passions in the human frame
 O'ut put the lion's rage to shame :
 And jealousy, by dark intrigue,
 With sordid avarice in league,
 Had practised with their bowl and knife
 Against the mourner's harmless life.
 This crime was charged 'gainst those who lay,
 Prison'd in Cuthbert's islet grey.

VIII.

And now the vessel skirts the strand
 Of mountainous Northumberland.
 Towns, towers, and halls, successive rise,
 And catch the nuns' delighted eyes.
 Monk-Wearmouth soon behind them lay,
 And Tynemouth's priory and bay;
 They mark'd, amid her trees, the hall
 Of lofty Seaton-Delaval;
 They saw the Blythe and Wansbeck floods
 Rush to the sea through sounding woods;
 They pass'd the tower of Widderington,
 Mother of many a valiant son;
 At Coquet-isle their beads they tell
 To the good Saint who own'd the cell;
 Then did the Alne attention claim,
 And Warkworth, proud of Percy's name;
 And next, they cross'd themselves, to hear
 The whitening breakers sound so near,
 Where, boiling through the rocks, they roar
 On Dunstanborough's cavern'd shore;
 Thy tower, proud Bamborough, mark'd they there,
 King Ida's castle, huge and square,
 From its tall rock look'd grimly down,
 And on the swelling ocean frown;
 Then from the coast they bore away,
 And reach'd the Holy Island's bay.

IX.

The tide did now its flood-mark gain,
 And girdled in the Saint's domain:
 For, with the flow and ebb, its style
 Varies from continent to isle;
 Dry-shod, o'er sands, twice every day,
 The pilgrims to the shrine find way;
 Twice every day, the waves efface
 Of staves and sandall'd feet the trace.
 As to the port the galley flew,
 Higher and higher rose to view
 The Castle with its battled walls,
 The ancient Monastery's halls,
 A solemn, huge, and dark-red pile,
 Placed on the margin of the isle.

X.

In Saxon strength that Abbey frown'd,
 With massive arches broad and round,

That rose alternate, row and row,
On ponderous columns, short and low,
Built ere the art was known,
By pointed aisle, and shafted stalk,
The arcades of an alley'd walk
To emulate in stone.

On the deep walls the heathen Dane
Had pour'd his impious rage in vain;
And needful was such strength to these,
Exposed to the tempestuous seas,
Scourged by the winds' eternal sway,
Open to rovers fierce as they,
Which could twelve hundred years withstand
Winds, waves, and northern pirates' hand.
Not but that portions of the pile,
Rebuilt in a later style,
Show'd where the spoiler's hand had been;
Not but the wasting sea-breeze keen
Had worn the pillar's carving quaint,
And moulder'd in his niche the saint,
And rounded, with consuming power,
The pointed angles of each tower;
Yet still entire the Abbey stood,
Like veteran, worn, but unsubdued.

XI.

Soon as they near'd his turrets strong,
The maidens raised Saint Hilda's song,
And with the sea-wave and the wind,
Their voices, sweetly shrill, combined,
And made harmonious close;
Then, answering from the sandy shore,
Half-drown'd amid the breakers' roar,
According chorus rose:
Down to the haven of the Isle,
The monks and nuns in order file,
From Cuthbert's cloisters grim;
Banner, and cross, and relics there,
To meet Saint Hilda's maids, they bare;
And, as they caught the sounds on air,
They echoed back the hymn.
The islanders, in joyous mood,
Rush'd emulously through the flood,
To hale the bark to land;
Conspicuous by her veil and hood,
Signing the cross, the Abbess stood,
And bless'd them with her hand.

XII.

Suppose we now the welcome said,
Suppose the Convent banquet made:
All through the holy dome,
Through cloister, aisle, and gallery,
Wherever vestal maid might pry,

Nor risk to meet unhallow'd eye,
 The stranger sisters roam :
 Till fell the evening damp with dew,
 And the sharp sea-breeze coldly blew,
 For there, even summer night is chill.
 Then, having stray'd and gazed their fill,
 They closed around the fire ;
 And all, in turn, essay'd to paint
 The rival merits of their saint,
 A theme that ne'er can tire
 A holy maid ; for, be it known,
 That their saint's honour is their own.

XIII.

Then Whitby's nuns exulting told,
 How to their house three Barons bold
 Must menial service do ;
 While horns blow out a note of shame,
 And monks cry " Fy upon your name !
 In wrath, for loss of silvan game,
 Saint Hilda's priest ye slew."—
 " This, on Ascension-day, each year,
 While labouring on our harbour-pier,
 Must Herbert, Bruce, and Percy hear."—
 They told, how in their convent-cell
 A Saxon princess once did dwell,
 The lovely Edelfled.²⁵
 And how, of thousand snakes, each one
 Was changed into a coil of stone,
 When holy Hilda pray'd ;
 Themselves, within their holy bound,
 Their stony folds had often found.
 They told, how sea-fowls' pinions fail,
 As over Whitby's towers they sail,²⁶
 And, sinking down, with flutterings faint,
 They do their homage to the saint.

XIV.

Nor did Saint Cuthbert's daughters fail
 To vie with these in holy tale ;
 His body's resting-place of old,
 How oft their patron changed, they told ;²⁷
 How, when the rude Dane burn'd their pile,
 The monks fled forth from Holy Isle ;
 O'er northern mountain, marsh, and moor,
 From sea to sea, from shore to shore,
 Seven years Saint Cuthbert's corpse they bore,
 They rested them in fair Melrose ;
 But though, alive, he loved it well,
 Not there his relics might repose ;
 For, wondrous tale to tell !
 In his stone-coffin forth he rides,
 A ponderous bark for river tides,
 Yet light as gossamer it glides,
 Downward to Tilmouth cell.

Nor long was his abiding there,
For southward did the saint repair
Chester-le-Street, and Rippon, saw
His holy corpse, ere Wardilaw
Hail'd him with joy and fear ;
And, after many wanderings past,
He chose his lordly seat at last,
Where his cathedral, huge and vast,
Looks down upon the Wear :
There deep in Durham's Gothic shade,
His relics are in secret laid ;
But none may know the place.
Save of his holiest servants three,
Deep sworn to solemn secrecy,
Who share that wondrous grace.

XV.

Who may his miracles declare !
Even Scotland's dauntless king, and heir,
(Although with them they led
Galwegians, wild as ocean's gale,
And Lodon's knights, all sheathed in mail,
And the bold men of Teviotdale,
Before his standard fled.²⁸
'Twas he, to vindicate his reign,
Edged Alfred's falchion on the Dane,
And turn'd the Conqueror back again,²⁹
When, with his Norman bowyer band,
He came to waste Northumberland.

XVI.

But fain Saint Hilda's nuns would learn
If, on a rock, by Lindisfarne,
Saint Cuthbert sits, and toils to frame
The sea-born beads that bear his name :³⁰
Such tales had Whitby's fishers told,
And said they might his shape behold,
And hear his anvil sound ;
A deaden'd clang,—a huge dim form,
Seen but, and heard, when gathering storm
And night was closing round.
But this, as tale of idle fame,
The nuns of Lindisfarne disclaim.

XVII.

While round the fire such legends go,
Far different was the scene of woe,
Where, in a secret aisle beneath,
Council was held of life and death.
It was more dark and lone that vault,
Than the worst dungeon cell :
Old Colwulf³¹ built it, for his fault,
In penitence to dwell,
When he, for cowl and beads, laid down
The Saxon battle-axe and crown.

This den which, chilling every sense
 Of feeling, hearing, sight,
 Was call'd the Vault of Penitence,
 Excluding air and light,
 Was, by the prelate Sexhelm, made
 A place of burial for such dead,
 As, having died in mortal sin,
 Might not be laid the church within.
 'Twas now a place of punishment;
 Whence if so loud a shriek were sent,
 As reach'd the upper air,
 The hearers bless'd themselves, and said,
 'The spirits of the sinful dead
 Bemoan'd their torments there.

XVIII.

But though, in the monastic pile,
 Did of this penitential aisle
 Some vague tradition go,
 Few only, save the Abbot, knew
 Where the place lay; and still more few
 Were those, who had from him the clew
 To that dread vault to go.
 Victim and executioner
 Were blindfold when transported there.
 In low dark rounds the arches hung,
 From the rude rock the side-walls sprung;
 The grave-stones, rudely sculptured o'er,
 Half sunk in earth, by time half wore,
 Were all the pavement of the floor;
 The mildew-drops fell one by one,
 With tinkling plash upon the stone.
 A cresset,^a in an iron chain,
 Which served to light this drear domain,
 With damp and darkness seemed to strive,
 As if it scarce might keep alive;
 And yet it dimly served to show
 The awful conclave met below.

XIX.

There, met to doom in secrecy,
 Were placed the heads of convents three:
 All servants of Saint Benedict,
 The statutes of whose order strict
 On iron table lay;
 In long black dress, on seats of stone,
 Behind were these three judges shown
 By the pale cresset's ray:
 The Abbess of Saint Hilda's, there,
 Sat for a space with visage bare,
 Until, to hide her bosom's swell,
 And tear-drops that for pity fell,
 She closely drew her veil:

^a Antique chandelier.

Yon shrouded figure, as I guess,
By her proud mien and flowing dress,
Is Tynemouth's haughty Prioress,²³
And she with awe looks pale :
And he, that Ancient Man, whose sight
Has long been quenched by age's night,
Upon whose wrinkled brow alone,
Nor ruth, nor mercy's trace is shown,
Whose look is hard and stern,—
Saint Cuthbert's Abbot is his style ;
For sanctity call'd, through the isle,
The Saint of Lindisfarne.

XX.

Before them stood a guilty pair ;
But, though an equal fate they share,
Yet one alone deserves our care.
Her sex a page's dress belied ;
The cloak and doublet, loosely tied,
Obscured her charms, but could not hide.
Her cap down o'er her face she drew ;
And, on her doublet breast,
She tried to hide the badge of blue,
Lord Marmion's falcon crest.
But, at the Prioress' command,
A monk undid the silken band,
That tied her tresses fair,
And raised the bonnet from her head,
And down her slender form they spread,
In ringlets rich and rare.
Constance de Beverley they know,
Sister profess'd of Fontevraud,
Whom the church numbered with the dead,
For broken vows, and convent fled.

XXI.

When thus her face was given to view,
(Although so palid was her hue,
It did a ghastly contrast bear
To those bright ringlets glistening fair,)
Her look composed, and steady eye,
Bespoke a matchless constancy ;
And there she stood so calm and pale,
That, but her breathing did not fail,
And motion slight of eye and head,
And of her bosom, warranted
That neither sense nor pulse she lacks,
You might have thought a form of wax,
Wrought to the very life, was there ;
So still she was, so pale, so fair.

XXII.

Her comrade was a sordid soul,
Such as does murder for a meed ;
Who, but of fear, knows no control,

Because his conscience, sear'd and foul,
Feels not the import of his deed;
One, whose brute-feeling ne'er aspires
Beyond his own more brute desires.
Such tools the tempter ever needs,
To do the savagest of deeds;
For them no vision'd terrors daunt,
Their nights no fancied spectres haunt,
One fear with them, of all most base,
The fear of death,—alone finds place.
This wretch was clad in frock and cowl,
And shamed not loud to moan and howl,
His body on the floor to dash,
And crouch, like hound beneath the lash;
While his mute partner, standing near,
Waited her doom without a tear.

XXIII.

Yet well the luckless wretch might shriek,
Well might her paleness terror speak!
For there were seen in that dark wall,
Two niches, narrow, deep and tall;—
Who enters at such grisly door,
Shall ne'er, I ween, find exit more.
In each a slender meal was laid,
Of roots, of water, and of bread:
By each, in Benedictine dress,
Two haggard monks stood motionless;
Who, holding high a blazing torch,
Show'd the grim entrance of the porch:
Reflecting back the smoky beam,
The dark-red walls and arches gleam.
Hewn stones and cement were display'd,
And building tools in order laid.

XXIV.

These executioners were chose,
As men who were with mankind foes,
And with despite and envy fired,
Into the cloister had retired;
Or who, in desperate doubt of grace,
Strove, by deep penance, to efface
Of some foul crime the stain;
For, as the vassals of her will,
Such men the Church selected still,
As either joy'd in doing ill,
Or thought more grace to gain,
If, in her cause, they wrestled down
Feelings their nature strove to own.
By strange device were they brought there,
They knew not how, nor knew not where.

XXV.

And now that blind old Abbot rose,
To speak the Chapter's doom

On those the wall was to enclose,
Alive, within the tomb;³³
But stopp'd, because that woful Maid,
Gathering her powers, to speak essay'd.
Twice she essay'd, and twice in vain;
Her accents might no utterance gain;
Nought but imperfect murmurs slip
From her convulsed and quivering lip;
'Twixt each attempt all was so still,
You seem'd to hear a distant rill—
'Twas ocean's swells and falls;
For though this vault of sin and fear
Was to the sounding surge so near,
A tempest there you scarce could hear
So massive were the walls.

XXVI.

At length, an effort sent apart
The blood that curdled to her heart,
And light came to her eye,
And colour dawn'd upon her cheek,
A hectic and a flutter'd streak,
Like that left on the Cheviot peak,
By Autumn's stormy sky
And when her silence broke at length,
Still as she spoke she gathered strength,
And arm'd herself to bear.
It was a fearful sight to see
Such high resolve and constancy,
In form so soft and fair.

XXVII.

"I speak not to implore your grace,
Well know I, for one minute's space
Successless might I sue:
Nor do I speak your prayers to gain
For if a death of lingering pain,
To cleanse my sins, be penance vain,
Vain are your masses too.—
I listen'd to a traitor's tale,
I left the convent and the veil
For three long years I bow'd my pride,
A horse-boy in his train to ride;
And well my folly's meed he gave,
Who forfeited, to be his slave,
All here, and all beyond the grave.—
He saw young Clara's face more fair,
He knew her of broad lands the heir,
Forgot his vows, his faith forswore,
And Constance was beloved no more.—
'Tis an old tale, and often told;
But did my fate and wish agree,
Ne'er had been read, in story old,
Of maiden true betray'd for gold,
That loved, or was avenged, like me.

XXVIII.

"The King approved his favourite's aim;
 In vain a rival barr'd his claim,
 Whose fate with Clare's was plight,
 For he attaints that rival's fame
 With treason's charge—and on they came,
 In mortal lists to fight.
 Their oaths are said,
 Their prayers are pray'd,
 Their lances in the rest are laid,
 They meet in mortal shock;
 And, hark! the throng, with thundering cry,
 Shout 'Marmion! Marmion! to the sky,
 De Wilton to the block!
 Say ye, who preach Heaven shall decide
 When in the lists two champions ride,
 Say, was Heaven's justice here?
 When, loyal in his love and faith,
 Wilton found overthrow or death,
 Beneath a traitor's spear?
 How false the charge, how true he fell,
 This guilty packet best can tell."—
 Then drew a packet from her breast,
 Paused, gather'd voice, and spoke the rest.—

XXIX.

"Still was false Marmion's bridal staid;
 To Whitby's convent fled the maid,
 The hated match to shun.
 'Ho! shifts she thus?' king Henry cried;
 Sir Marmion, she shall be thy bride,
 If she were sworn a nun.
 One way remain'd—the King's command
 Sent Marmion to the Scottish land:
 I linger'd here, and rescue plann'd
 For Clara and for me:
 This caitiff Monk, for gold, did swear,
 He would to Whitby's shrine repair,
 And, by his drugs, my rival fair
 A saint in heaven should be.
 But ill the dastard kept his oath,
 Whose cowardice has undone us both.

XXX.

"And now my tongue the secret tells,
 Not that remorse my bosom swells,
 But to assure my soul that none
 Shall ever wed with Marmion.
 Had fortune my last hope betray'd,
 This packet, to the King convey'd,
 Had given him to the headsman's stroke,
 Although my heart that instant broke.—
 Now, men of death, work forth your will
 For I can suffer, and be still;

And come he slow, or come he fast,
It is but Death who comes at last.

XXXI.

"Yet dread me, from my living tomb,
Ye vassal slaves of bloody Rome!
If Marmion's late remorse should wake,
Full soon such vengeance will he take,
That you shall wish the fiery Dane
Had rather been your guest again.
Behind, a darker hour ascends!
The altars quake, the crosier bends,
The ire of a despotic King
Rides forth upon destruction's wing;
Then shall these vaults, so strong and deep,
Burst open to the sea-winds' sweep;
Some traveller then shall find my bones
Whitening amid disjointed stones,
And, ignorant of priests' cruelty,
Marvel such relics here should be."

XXXII.

Fix'd was her look, and stern her air:
Back from her shoulders stream'd her hair;
The locks, that wont her brow to shade,
Stared up erectly from her head;
Her figure seem'd to rise more high;
Her voice, despair's wild energy
Had given a tone of prophecy.
Appall'd the astonish'd conclave sate;
With stupid eyes, the men of fate
Gazed on the light inspired form,
And listen'd for the avenging storm;
The judges felt the victim's dread;
No hand was moved, no word was said,
Till thus the Abbot's doom was given,
Raising his sightless balls to heaven:—
"Sister, let thy sorrows cease;
Sinful brother, part in peace!"^a
From that dire dungeon, place of doom,
Of execution too, and tomb,
Paced forth the judges three;
Sorrow it were, and shame, to tell
The butcher-work that there befell,
When they had glided from the cell
Of sin and misery.

XXXIII.

An hundred winding steps convey
That conclave to the upper day;
But, ere they breathed the fresher air,
They heard the shriekings of despair,
And many a stifled groan:

^a See Note 33 on Stanza XXV.

With speed their upward way they take,
 Such speed as age and fear can make,
 And cross'd themselves for terror's sake,
 As hurrying, tottering on :
 Even in the vesper's heavenly tone,
 They seem'd to hear a dying groan,
 And bade the passing knell to toll
 For welfare of a parting soul.
 Slow o'er the midnight wave it swung,
 Northumbrian rocks in answer rung
 To Warkworth cell the echoes roll'd,
 His beads the wakeful hermit told,
 The Bamborough peasant raised his head,
 But slept ere half a prayer he said ;
 So far was heard the mighty knell,
 The stag sprung up on Cheviot Fell,
 Spread his broad nostril to the wind,
 Listed before, aside, behind,
 Then couch'd him down beside the hind,
 And quaked among the mountain fern,
 To hear that sound so dull and stern.

Introduction to Canto Third.

To WILLIAM ERSKINE, Esq.

Ashestiel, Ettrick Forest.

LIKE April morning clouds, that pass,
 With varying shadow, o'er the grass,
 And imitate, on field and furrow,
 Life's chequer'd scene of joy and sorrow ;
 Like streamlet of the mountain north,
 Now in a torrent racing forth,
 Now winding slow its silver train,
 And almost slumbering on the plain ;
 Like breezes of the Autumn day,
 Whose voice inconstant dies away,
 And ever swells again as fast,
 When the ear deems its murmur past ;
 Thus various, my romantic theme
 Flits, winds, or sinks, a morning dream.
 Yet pleased, our eye pursues the trace
 Of Light and Shade's inconstant race ;
 Pleased, views the rivulet afar,
 Weaving its maze irregular ;
 And pleased, we listen as the breeze
 Heaves its wild sigh through Autumn trees :

Then, wild as cloud, or stream, or gale,
Flow on, flow unconfined, my Tale!

Need I to thee, dear Erskine, tell
I love the license all too well,
In sounds now lowly, and now strong,
To raise the desultory song?—
Oft, when 'mid such capricious chime,
Some transient fit of lofty rhyme
To thy kind judgment seem'd excuse
For many an error of the muse,
Oft hast thou said, "If, still mis-spent,
Thine hours to poetry are lent,
Go, and to tame thy wandering course,
Quaff from the fountain at the source;
Approach those masters, o'er whose tomb
Immortal laurels ever bloom:
Instructive of the feeble bard,
Still from the grave their voice is heard;
From them, and from the paths they show'd,
Choose honour'd guide and practised road:
Nor ramble on through brake and maze,
With harpers rude, of barbarous days.

"Or deem'st thou not our later time
Yields topic meet for classic rhyme?
Hast thou no elegiac verse
For Brunswick's venerable hearse?
What! not a line, a tear, a sigh,
When valour bleeds for liberty?—
Oh, hero of that glorious time,
When, with unrivall'd light sublime,—
Though martial Austria, and though all
The might of Russia, and the Gaul,
Though banded Europe stood her foes—
The star of Brandenburg arose!
Thou couldst not live to see her beam
For ever quenched in Jena's stream.
Lamented Chief!—it was not given
To thee to change the doom of Heaven,
And crush that dragon in its birth,
Predestined scourge of guilty earth.
Lamented Chief!—not thine the power
To save in that presumptuous hour,
When Prussia hurried to the field,
And snatched the spear, but left the shield
Valour and skill 'twas thine to try,
And, tried in vain, 'twas thine to die.
Ill had it seem'd thy silver hair
The last, the bitterest pang to share,
For princedom's reft, and scutcheons riven,
And birthrights to usurpers given;
Thy land's, thy children's wrongs to feel,
And witness woes thou couldst not heal

On thee relenting Heaven bestows
 For honour'd life an honour'd close;
 And when revolves, in time's sure change,
 The hour of Germany's revenge,
 When, breathing fury for her sake
 Some new Armenius shall awake,
 Her champion, ere he strike, shall come
 To whet his sword on BRUNSVICK's tomb.

"Or of the Red-Cross hero^a teach,
 Dauntless in dungeon as on breach:
 Alike to him the sea, the shore,
 The brand, the bridle, or the oar:
 Alike to him the war that calls
 Its votaries to the shattered walls,
 Which the grim Turk, besmear'd with blood,
 Against the Invincible made good;
 Or that, whose thundering voice could wake
 The silence of the polar lake,
 When stubborn Russ, and metal'd Swede,
 On the warp'd wave their death-game play'd;
 Or that, where Vengeance and Affright
 Howl'd round the father of the fight,
 Who snatched, on Alexandria's sand,
 The conqueror's wreath with dying hand.^b

"Or, if to touch such chord be thine,
 Restore the ancient tragic line,
 And emulate the notes that rung
 From the wild harp, which silent hung
 By silver Avon's holy shore,
 Till twice an hundred years roll'd o'er;
 When she, the bold enchantress,^c came,
 With fearless hand and heart on flame!
 From the pale willow snatch'd the treasure,
 And swept it with a kindred measure,
 Till Avon's swans, while ring the grove
 With Montfort's hate and Basil's love,
 Awakening at the inspired strain,
 Deem'd their own Shakspeare lived again."

Thy friendship thus thy judgment wronging,
 With praises not to me belonging,
 In task more meet for mightiest powers,
 Wouldst thou engage my thriftless hours.
 But say, my Erskine, hast thou weigh'd
 That secret power by all obey'd,
 Which warps not less the passive mind,
 Its source conceal'd, or undefined;
 Whether an impulse, that has birth
 Soon as the infant wakes on earth,
 One with our feelings and our powers,
 And rather part of us than ours;

^a Sir Sidney Smith,^b Sir Ralph Abercromby.^c Joanna Bail

Or whether ftiler term'd the sway
Of habit form'd in early day ?
Howe'er derived, its force confest
Rules with despotic sway the breast,
And drags us on by viewless chain,
While taste and reason plead in vain.
Look east, and ask the Belgian why,
Beneath Batavia's sultry sky,
He seeks not eager to inhale
The freshness of the mountain gale,
Content to rear his whitened wall
Beside the dank and dull canal ?
He'll say, from youth he loved to see
The white sail gliding by the tree.
Or see yon weather-beaten hind,
Whose sluggish herds before him wind,
Whose tatter'd plaid and rugged cheek
His northern clime and kindred speak ;
Through England's laughing meads he goes,
And England's wealth around him flows ;
Ask, if it would content him well,
At ease in those gay plains to dwell,
Where hedge-rows spread a verdant screen,
And spires and forests intervene,
And the neat cottage peeps between ?
No ! not for these would he exchange
His dark Lochaber's boundless range :
Not for fair Devon's meads forsake
Bennevis grey, and Garry's lake.

Thus while I ape the measure wild
Of tales that charm'd me yet a child,
Rude though they be, still with the chime
Return the thoughts of early time ;
And feelings, roused in life's first day,
Glow in the line, and prompt the lay.
Then rise those crags, that mountain tower
Which charm'd my fancy's wakening hour.
Though no broad river swept along,
To claim, perchance, heroic song ;
Though sigh'd no groves in summer gale,
To prompt of love a softer tale ;
Though scarce a puny streamlet's speed
Claim'd homage from a shepherd's reed ;
Yet was poetic impulse given,
By the green hill and clear blue heaven.
It was a barren scene, and wild,
Where naked cliffs were rudely piled ;
But ever and anon between
Lay velvet tufts of loveliest green ;
And well the lonely infant knew
Recesses where the wall-flower grew
And honeysuckle loved to crawl
Up the low crag and ruin'd wall.

I deem'd such nooks the sweetest shade
 The sun in all its round survey'd;
 And still I thought that shatter'd tower
 The mightiest work of human power;
 And marvell'd as the aged hind
 With some strange tale bewitch'd my mind
 Of forayers, who, with headlong force,
 Down from that strength had spurr'd their horse.
 Their southern rapine to renew,
 Far in the distant Cheviots blue,
 And, home returning, fill'd the hall
 With revel, wassel-rout, and brawl.
 Methought that still, with trump and clang,
 The gateway's broken arches rang;
 Methought grim features seam'd with scars,
 Glared through the window's rusty bars,
 And ever, by the winter hearth,
 Old tales I heard of woe or mirth,
 Of lovers' slights, of ladies' charms,
 Of witches' spells, of warriors' arms;
 Of patriot battles, won of old
 By Wallace wight and Bruce the bold;
 Of later fields of feud and fight,
 When, pouring from their Highland height,
 The Scottish clans, in headlong sway,
 Had swept the scarlet ranks away.
 While stretch'd at length upon the floor,
 Again I fought each combat o'er,
 Pebbles and shells, in order laid,
 The mimic ranks of war display'd;
 And onward still the Scottish Lion bore,
 And still the scatter'd Southron fled before.

Still, with vain fondness, could I trace,
 Anew, each kind familiar face,
 That brighten'd at our evening fire!
 From the thatch'd mansion's grey-hair'd Sire,
 Wise without learning, plain and good,
 And sprung of Scotland's gentler blood;
 Whose eye, in age, quick, clear, and keen,
 Show'd what in youth its glance had been;
 Whose doom discording neighbours sought,
 Content with equity unbought;
 To him the venerable Priest;
 Our frequent and familiar guest,
 Whose life and manners well could paint
 Alike the student and the saint;
 Alas! whose speech too oft I broke
 With gambol rude and timeless joke:
 For I was wayward, bold, and wild,
 A self-will'd imp, a grandame's child;
 But half a plague, and half a jest,
 Was still endured, beloved, caress'd.

For me, thus nurtured, dost thou ask
The classic poet's well-conn'd task?
Nay, Erskine, nay—On the wild hill
Let the wild heath-bell flourish still;
Cherish the tulip, prune the vine,
But freely let the woodbine twine,
And leave untrimm'd the eglantine:
Nay, my friend, nay—Since oft thy praise
Hath given fresh vigour to my lays;
Since oft thy judgment could refine
My flatten'd thought, or cumbrous line;
Still kind, as is thy wont, attend,
And in the minstrel spare the friend.
Though wild as cloud, as stream, as gale,
Flow forth, flow unrestrain'd, my Tale!

CANTO THIRD.

The Hostel, or Inn.

I.

THE livelong day Lord Marmion rode:
The mountain path the Palmer show'd,
By glen and streamlet winded still,
Where stunted birches hid the rill.
They might not choose the lowland road,
For the Merse forayers were abroad,
Who, fired with hate and thirst of prey,
Had scarcely fail'd to bar their way.
Oft on the trampling band, from crown
Of some tall cliff, the deer look'd down;
On wing of jet, from his repose
In the deep heath, the black-cock rose;
Sprung from the gorse the timid roe,
Nor waited for the bending bow;
And when the stony path began,
By which the naked peak they wan,
Up flew the snowy ptarmigan.
The noon had long been pass'd before
They gain'd the height of Lammermoor;
Thence winding down the northern way,
Before them, at the close of day,
Old Gifford's towers and hamlet lay.

II.

No summons calls them to the tower,
To spend the hospitable hour.
To Scotland's camp the Lord was gone;
His cautious dame, in bower alone,

Dreaded her castle to unclose,
So late, to unknown friends or foes.
On through the hamlet as they paced,
Before a porch, whose front was graced
With bush and flagon trimly placed,
Lord Marmion drew his rein :
The village inn seem'd large, though rude ;⁸⁴
Its cheerful fire and hearty food
Might well relieve his train.
Down from their seats the horsemen sprung,
With jingling spurs the court-yard rung ;
They bind their horses to the stall,
For forage, food, and firing call,
And various clamour fills the hall :
Weighing the labour with the cost,
Toils everywhere the bustling host.

III.

Soon by the chimney's merry blaze,
Through the rude hostel might you gaze ;
Might see, where, in dark nook aloof,
The rafters of the sooty roof
Bore wealth of winter cheer ;
Of sea-fowl dried, and solands store,
And gammons of the tusky boar,
And savoury haunch of deer.
The chimney arch projected wide ;
Above, around it, and beside,
Were tools for housewives' hand ;
Nor wanted, in that martial day,
The implements of Scottish fray,
The buckler, lance, and brand.
Beneath its shade, the place of state,
On oaken settle Marmion sate,
And view'd around the blazing hearth.
His followers mix in noisy mirth ;
Whom with brown ale, in jolly tide,
From ancient vessels ranged aside,
Full actively their host supplied.

IV.

Theirs was the glee of martial breast,
And laughter theirs at little jest ;
And oft Lord Marmion deigned to aid,
And mingle in the mirth they made ;
For though, with men of high degree,
The proudest of the proud was he
Yet, train'd in camps, he knew the art
To win the soldier's hardy heart.
They love a captain to obey,
Boisterous as March, yet fresh as May
With open hand, and brow as free,
Lover of wine and minstrelsy ;
Ever the first to scale a tower,
As venturous in a lady's bower :—

Such buxom chief shall lead his host
From India's fires to Zembla's frost.

V.

Resting upon his pilgrim staff,
Right opposite the Palmer stood;
His thin dark visage seen but half,
Half hidden by his hood.
Still fix'd on Marmion was his look,
Which he, who ill such gaze could brook,
Strove by a frown to quell;
But not for that, though more than once
Full met their stern encountering glance,
The Palmer's visage fell.

VI.

By fits less frequent from the crowd
Was heard the burst of laughter loud;
For still, as squire and archer stared
On that dark face and matted beard,
Their glee and game declined.
All gazed at length in silence drear,
Unbroke, save when in comrade's ear
Some yeoman, wondering in his fear,
Thus whisper'd forth his mind :—
"Saint Mary! saw'st thou e'er such sight?
How pale his cheek, his eye how bright,
Whene'er the fire-brand's fickle light
Glances beneath his cowl!
Full on our Lord he sets his eye;
For his best palfrey, would not I
Endure that sullen scowl."

VII.

But Marmion, as to chase the awe
Which thus had quell'd their hearts, who saw
The ever-varying fire-light show
That figure stern and face of woe,
Now call'd upon a squire :—
"Fitz-Eustace, know'st thou not some lay,
To speed the lingering night away?
We slumber by the fire."—

VIII.

"So please you," thus the youth rejoin'd,
"Our choicest minstrel's left behind.
Ill may we hope to please your ear,
Accustom'd Constant's strains to hear.
The harp full deftly can he strike,
And wake the lover's lute alike;
To dear Saint Valentine, no thrush
Sings livelier from a spring-tide bush,
No nightingale her love-lorn tune
More sweetly warbles to the moon.

Woe to the cause, whate'er it be,
 Detains from us his melody,
 Lavish'd on rocks, and billows stern,
 Or duller monks of Lindisfarne.
 Now must I venture, as I may,
 To sing his favourite roundelay."

IX.

A mellow voice Fitz-Eustace had,
 The air he chose was wild and sad;
 Such have I heard, in Scottish land,
 Rise from the busy harvest band,
 When falls before the mountaineer,
 On Lowland plains, the ripen'd ear.
 Now one shrill voice the notes prolong,
 Now a wild chorus swells the song:
 Oft have I listen'd, and stood still,
 As it came soften'd up the hill,
 And deem'd it the lament of men
 Who languish'd for their native glen;
 And thought how sad would be such sound
 On Susquehana's swampy ground,
 Kentucky's wood-encumber'd brake,
 Or wild Ontario's boundless lake,
 Where heart-sick exiles, in the strain,
 Recall'd fair Scotland's hills again!

X.

Song.

Where shall the lover rest,
 Whom the fates sever
 From his true maiden's breast,
 Parted for ever?
 Where, through groves deep and high,
 Sounds the far billow,
 Where early violets die,
 Under the willow.

CHORUS.

Eleu loro, &c. Soft shall be his pillow.

There, through the summer day,
 Cool streams are laving;
 There, while the tempests sway,
 Scarce are boughs waving;
 There, thy rest shalt thou take,
 Parted for ever,
 Never, again to wake,
 Never, O never!

CHORUS.

Eleu loro, &c. Never, O never!

Where shall the traitor rest,
 He, the deceiver,

Who could win maiden's breast,
 Ruin, and leave her?
 In the lost battle,
 Borne down by the flying,
 Where mingles war's rattle
 With groans of the dying.

CHORUS.

Eleu loro, &c. There shall he be lying.

Her wing shall the eagle flap
 O'er the false-hearted;
 His warm blood the wolf shall lap,
 Ere life be parted.
 Shame and dishonour sit
 By his grave ever;
 Blessing shall hallow it,—
 Never, O never!

CHORUS.

Eleu loro, &c. Never, O never!

XII.

It ceased, the melancholy sound;
 And silence sunk on all around.
 The air was sad; but sadder still
 It fell on Marmion's ear,
 And plain'd as if disgrace and ill,
 And shameful death, were near.
 He drew his mantle past his face,
 Between it and the band,
 And rested with his head a space,
 Reclining on his hand.
 His thoughts I scan not; but I ween,
 That, could their import have been seen,
 The meanest groom in all the hall,
 That e'er tied courser to a stall,
 Would scarce have wished to be their prey,
 For Lutterward and Fontenaye.

XIII.

High minds, of native pride and force,
 Most deeply feel thy pangs, Remorse!
 Fear, for their scourge, mean villains have,
 Thou art the torturer of the brave!
 Yet fatal strength they boast to steel
 Their minds to bear the wounds they feel,
 Even while they writhe beneath the smart
 Of civil conflict in the heart.
 For soon Lord Marmion raised his head,
 And, smiling to Fitz-Eustace said—
 "Is it not strange, that, as ye sung,
 Seem'd in mine ear a death-peal rung,
 Such as in nunneries they toll
 For some departing sister's soul?"

Say, what may this portend?"—
 Then first the Palmer silence broke,
 (The livelong day he had not spoke,
 "The death of a dear friend."³⁵)

XIV.

Marmion, whose steady heart and eye
 Ne'er changed in worst extremity;
 Marmion, whose soul could scantily brook,
 Even from his King, a haughty look;
 Whose accent of command controll'd,
 In camps, the boldest of the bold;—
 Thought, look, and utterance fail'd him now—
 Fall'n was his glance, and flush'd his brow:
 For either in the tone,
 Or something in the Palmer's look,
 So full upon his conscience strook,
 That answer he found none.
 Thus oft it haps, that when within
 They shrink at sense of secret sin,
 A feather daunts the brave;
 A fool's wild speech confounds the wise,
 And proudest princes veil their eyes
 Before their meanest slave.

XV.

Well might he falter!—By his aid
 Was Constance Beverley betray'd.
 Not that he augur'd of the doom,
 Which on the living closed the tomb:
 But, tired to hear the desperate maid
 Threaten by turns, beseech, upbraid;
 And wroth, because in wild despair
 She practised on the life of Clare;
 Its fugitive the Church he gave,
 Though not a victim, but a slave;
 And deem'd restraint in convent strange
 Would hide her wrongs, and her revenge.
 Himself, proud Henry's favourite peer,
 Held Romish thunders idle fear;
 Secure his pardon he might hold,
 For some slight mulct of penance-gold.
 Thus judging, he gave secret way,
 When the stern priests surprised their prey.
 His train but deem'd the favourite page
 Was left behind, to spare his age;
 Or other if they deem'd, none dared
 To mutter what he thought and heard.
 Woe to the vassal, who durst pry
 Into Lord Marmion's privacy!

XVI.

His conscience slept—he deem'd her well,
 And safe secured in distant cell;

But, waken'd by her favourite lay,
 And that strange Palmer's boding say,
 That fell so ominous and drear,
 Full on the object of his fear,
 To aid remorse's venom'd throes,
 Dark tales of convent-vengeance rose ;
 And Constance, late betray'd and scorn'd,
 All lovely on his soul return'd ;
 Lovely as when, at treacherous call,
 She left her convent's peaceful wall,
 Crimson'd with shame, with terror mute,
 Dreading alike, escape, pursuit,
 Till love, victorious o'er alarms,
 Hid fears and blushes in his arms.

XVII.

"Alas!" he thought, "how changed that mien!
 How changed these timid looks have been,
 Since years of guilt, and of disguise,
 Have steel'd her brow, and arm'd her eyes!
 No more of virgin terror speaks
 The blood that mantles in her cheeks:
 Fierce, and unfeminine, are there,
 Frenzy for joy, for grief despair;
 And I the cause—for whom were given
 Her peace on earth, her hopes in heaven!—
 Would," thought he, as the picture grows,
 "I on its stalk had left the rose!
 Oh, why should man's success remove
 The very charms that wake his love!—
 Her convent's peaceful solitude
 Is now a prison harsh and rude;
 And, pent within the narrow cell,
 How will her spirit chafe and swell!
 How brook the stern monastic laws!
 The penance how—and I the cause!—
 Vigil and scourge—perchance even worse!"—
 And twice he rose to cry, "To horse!"—
 And twice his Sovereign's mandate came,
 Like damp upon a kindling flame;
 And twice he thought, "Gave I not charge
 She should be safe, though not at large?
 They durst not, for their island, shred
 One golden ringlet from her head"

XVIII.

While thus in Marmion's bosom strove
 Repentance and reviving love,
 Like whirlwinds, whose contending sway
 I've seen Loch Vennacher obey,
 Their Host the Palmer's speech had heard,
 And, talkative, took up the word:
 "Ay, reverend Pilgrim, you, who stray
 From Scotland's simple land away,
 To visit realms afar,

Full often learn the art to know
 Of future weal, or future woe,
 By word, or sign, or star;
 Yet might a knight his fortune hear
 If, knight-like, he despises fear,
 Not far from hence;—if fathers old
 Aright our hamlet legend told.”—
 These broken words the menials move,
 (For marvels still the vulgar love,)
 And, Marmion giving license cold,
 His tale the Host thus gladly told:—

XIX.

The Host's Tale.

“A Clerk could tell what years have flown
 Since Alexander fill'd our throne,
 (Third monarch of that warlike name,)
 And eke the time when here he came
 To seek Sir Hugo, then our lord:
 A braver never drew a sword;
 A wiser never, at the hour
 Of midnight, spoke the word of power:
 The same, whom ancient records call
 The founder of the Goblin-Hall.³⁶
 I would, Sir Knight, your longer stay
 Gave you that cavern to survey.
 Of lofty roof, and ample size,
 Beneath the castle deep it lies:
 To hew the living rock profound,
 The floor to pave, the arch to round,
 There never toil'd a mortal arm—
 It all was wrought by word and charm;
 And I have heard my grandsire say,
 That the wild clamour and affray
 Of those dread artisans of hell,
 Who labour'd under Hugo's spell,
 Sounded as loud as ocean's war
 Among the caverns of Dunbar.

XX.

“The King Lord Gifford's castle sought,
 Deep labouring with uncertain thought;
 Even then he muster'd all his host,
 To meet upon the western coast:
 For Norse and Danish galleys plied
 Their oars within the frith of Clyde.
 There floated Haco's banner trim,³⁷
 Above Norweyan warriors grim,
 Savage of heart, and large of limb;
 Threatening both continent and isle,
 Bute, Arran, Cunninghame, and Kyle.
 Lord Gifford, deep beneath the ground,
 Heard Alexander's bugle sound.

And tarried not his garb to change,
But, in his wizard habit strange,
Came forth,—a quaint and fearful sight;
His mantle lined with fox-skins white;
His high and wrinkled forehead bore
A pointed cap, such as of yore
Clerks say that Pharaoh's Magi wore:
His shoes were mark'd with cross and spell,
Upon his breast a pentacle;³⁸
His zone, of virgin parchment thin,
Or, as some tell, of dead man's skin,
Bore many a planetary sign,
Combust, and retrograde, and trine;
And in his hand he held prepared,
A naked sword without a guard.

XXI.

"Dire dealings with the fiendish race
Had mark'd strange lines upon his face;
Vigil and fast had worn him grim;
His eyesight dazzled seem'd and dim,
As one unused to upper day;
Even his own menials with dismay
Beheld, Sir Knight, the grisly Sire,
In his unwonted wild attire;
Unwonted, for traditions run,
He seldom thus beheld the sun.—
'I know,' he said—(his voice was hoarse,
And broken seem'd its hollow force)—
'I know the cause, although untold,
Why the King seeks his vassal's hold:
Vainly from me my liege would know
His kingdom's future weal or woe;
But yet, if strong his arm and heart,
His courage may do more than art.

XXII.

"Of middle air the demons proud,
Who ride upon the racking cloud,
Can read, in fix'd or wandering star,
The issue of events afar;
But still their sullen aid withhold,
Save when by mightier force controll'd.
Such late I summon'd to my hall;
And though so potent was the call,
That scarce the deepest nook of hell
I deem'd a refuge from the spell,
Yet, obstinate in silence still,
The haughty demon mocks my skill.
But thou,—who little know'st thy might,
As born upon that blessed night³⁹
When yawning graves, and dying groan,
Proclaim'd hell's empire overthrown,—
With untaught valour shalt compel
Response denied to magic spell.'—

'Gramercy, quoth our Monarch free,
 'Place him but front to front with me,
 And, by this good and honour'd brand,
 The gift of Cœur-de-Lion's hand,
 Soothly I swear, that, tide what tide,
 The demon shall a buffet bide.'—
 His bearing bold the wizard view'd,
 And thus, well pleased, his speech renew'd:—
 'There spoke the blood of Malcolm!—mark:
 Forth pacing hence, at midnight dark,
 The rampart seek, whose circling crown
 Crests the ascent of yonder down:
 A southern entrance shalt thou find;
 There halt, and there thy bugle wind,
 And trust thine elfin foe to see,
 In guise of thy worst enemy:
 Couch then thy lance, and spur thy steed—
 Upon him! and Saint George to speed!
 If he go down, thou soon shalt know
 Whate'er these airy sprites can show;—
 If thy heart fail thee in the strife,
 I am no warrant for thy life.'

XXIII.

"Soon as the midnight bell did ring,
 Alone, and arm'd, forth rode the King
 To that old camp's deserted round:
 Sir Knight, you well might mark the mound,
 Left-hand the town,—the Pictish race,
 The trench, long since, in blood did trace;
 The moor around is brown and bare,
 The space within is green and fair.
 The spot our village children know,
 For there the earliest wild-flowers grow;
 But woe betide the wandering wight,
 That treads its circle in the night!
 The breadth across, a bowshot clear,
 Gives ample space for full career:
 Opposed to the four points of heaven,
 By four deep gaps are entrance given.
 The southernmost our Monarch past,
 Halted, and blew a gallant blast;
 And on the north within the ring,
 Appear'd the form of England's King,
 Who then, a thousand leagues afar,
 In Palestine waged holy war:
 Yet arms like England's did he wield,
 Alike the leopards in the shield,
 Alike his Syrian courser's frame,
 The rider's length of limb the same
 Long afterwards did Scotland know,
 Fell Edward^a was her deadliest foe.

^a Edward I., surnamed Longshanks.

XXIV.

"The vision made our Monarch start,
 But soon he mann'd his noble heart,
 And in the first career they ran,
 The Elfin Knight fell, horse and man;
 Yet did a splinter of his lance
 Through Alexander's visor glance,
 And razed the skin—a puny wound.
 The King, light leaping to the ground,
 With naked blade his phantom foe
 Compell'd the future war to show.
 Of Largs he saw the glorious plain,
 Where still gigantic bones remain,
 Memorial of the Danish war;
 Himself he saw, amid the field,
 On high his brandish'd war-axe wield,
 And strike proud Haco from his car,
 While all around the shadowy Kings
 Denmark's grim ravens cower'd their wings.
 'Tis said, that, in that awful night,
 Remoter visions met his sight,
 Foreshowing future conquests far,
 When our sons' sons wage northern war;
 A royal city, tower and spire,
 Redden'd the midnight sky with fire,
 And shouting crews her navy bore,
 Triumphant to the victor shore.
 Such signs may learned clerks explain—
 They pass the wit of simple swain.

XXV.

"The joyful King turn'd home again,
 Headed his host, and quell'd the Dane;
 But yearly, when return'd the night
 Of his strange combat with the sprite,
 His wound must bleed and smart;
 Lord Gifford then would gibing say,
 'Bold as ye were, my liege, ye pay
 The penance of your start.'
 Long since beneath Dunfermline's nave,
 King Alexander fills his grave,
 Our Lady give him rest!
 Yet still the knightly spear and shield
 The Elfin Warrior doth wield,
 Upon the brown hill's breast;⁴⁰
 And many a knight hath proved his chance,
 In the charm'd ring to break a lance,
 But all have foully sped;
 Save two, as legends tell, and they
 Were Wallace wight, and Gilbert Hay.—
 Gentles, my tale is said."

XXVI.

The quaighs^a were deep, the liquor strong,
 And on the tale the yeoman-throng

^a A wooden cup composed of staves hooped together.

Had made a comment sage and long,
 But Marmion gave a sign :
 And, with their lord, the squires retire ;
 The rest around the hostel fire,
 Their drowsy limbs recline :
 For pillow, underneath each head,
 The quiver and the targè were laid.
 Deep slumbering on the hostel floor,
 Oppress'd with toil and ale, they snore :
 The dying flame in fitful change,
 Threw on the group its shadows strange.

XXVII.

Apart, and nestling in the hay
 Of a waste loft, Fitz-Eustace lay ;
 Scarce, by the pale moonlight, were seen
 The foldings of his mantle green :
 Lightly he dreamt, as youth will dream,
 Of sport by thicket, or by stream.
 Of hawk or hound, of ring or glove,
 Or, lighter yet, of lady's love.
 A cautious tread his slumber broke,
 And, close beside him, when he woke,
 In moonbeam half, and half in gloom,
 Stood a tall form, with nodding plume ;
 But, ere his dagger Eustace drew,
 His master Marmion's voice he knew.—

XXVIII.

" Fitz-Eustace ! rise,—I cannot rest ;—
 Yon churl's wild legend haunts my breast,
 And graver thoughts have chafed my mood :
 The air must cool my feverish blood ;
 And fain would I ride forth, to see
 The scene of elfin chivalry.
 Arise, and saddle me my steed ;
 And, gentle Eustace, take good heed
 Thou dost not rouse these drowsy slaves :
 I would not that the prating knaves
 Had cause for saying, o'er their ale,
 That I could credit such a tale."—
 Then softly down the steps they slid ;
 Eustace the stable door undid,
 And, darkling, Marmion's steed array'd.
 While, whispering, thus the Baron said :—

XXIX.

" Didst never, good my youth, hear tell,
 That on the hour when I was born,
 Saint George, who graced my sire's chapelle,
 Down from his steed of marble fell,
 A weary wight forlorn ?
 The flattering chaplains all agree,
 The champion left his steed to me.

I would, the omen's truth to snow,
That I could meet this Elfin Foe!
Blithe would I battle, for the right
To ask one question at the sprite:—
Vain thought! for elves, if elves there be,
An empty race, by fount or sea,
To dashing waters dance and sing,
Or round the green oak wheel their ring.*
Thus speaking, he his steed bestrode,
And from the hostel slowly rode.

XXX.

Fitz-Eustace followed him abroad,
And mark'd him pace the village road,
And listen'd to his horse's tramp,
Till, by the lessening sound,
He judged that of the Pictish camp
Lord Marmion sought the round.
Wonder it seem'd, in the squire's eyes,
That one, so wary held, and wise,—
Of whom 'twas said, he scarce received
For gospel, what the Church believed,—
Should, stirr'd by idle tale,
Ride forth in silence of the night,
As hoping half to meet a sprite,
Array'd in plate and mail.
For little did Fitz-Eustace know,
That passions, in contending flow,
Unfix the strongest mind;
Wearied from doubt to doubt to flee,
We welcome fond credulity,
Guide confident, though blind.

XXXI.

Little for this Fitz-Eustace cared,
But, patient, waited till he heard,
At distance, prick'd to utmost speed,
The foot-tramp of a flying steed,
Come townward rushing on;
First, dead, as if on turf it trode,
Then, clattering on the village road,—
In other pace than forth he yode,^a
Return'd Lord Marmion.
Down hastily he sprung from selle,
And, in his haste, wellnigh he fell;
To the squire's hand the rein he threw
And spoke no word as he withdrew:
But yet the moonlight did betray,
The falcon-crest was soil'd with clay;
And plainly might Fitz-Eustace see,
By stains upon the charger's knee,
And his left side, that on the moor
He had not kept his footing sure.

^a *Yode*, used by old poets for *went*.

Long musing on these wondrous signs,
 At length to rest the squire reclines,
 Broken and short; for still, between,
 Would dreams of terror intervene:
 Eustace did ne'er so blithely mark
 The first notes of the morning lark.

Introduction to Canto Fourth.

TO JAMES SKENE, Esq.

Ashestiel, Ettrick Forest.

AN ancient Minstrel sagely said,
 "Where is the life which late we led?"
 That motley clown in Arden wood,
 Whom humorous Jaques with envy view'd,
 Not even that clown could amplify,
 On this trite text, so long as I.
 Eleven years we now may tell,
 Since we have known each other well;
 Since, riding side by side, our hand
 First drew the voluntary brand;
 And sure, through many a varied scene,
 Unkindness never came between.
 Away these winged years have flown,
 To join the mass of ages gone;
 And though deep mark'd, like all below,
 With chequer'd shades of joy and woe;
 Though thou o'er realms and seas hast ranged,
 Mark'd cities lost, and empires changed,
 While here, at home, my narrower ken
 Somewhat of manners saw, and men;
 Though varying wishes, hopes, and fears
 Ever'd the progress of these years,
 Yet now, days, weeks, and months, but seem
 The recollection of a dream,
 So still we glide down to the sea
 Of fathomless eternity.

Even now it scarcely seems a day,
 Since first I tuned this idle lay;
 A task so often thrown aside,
 When leisure graver cares denied,
 That now, November's dreary gale,
 Whose voice inspir'd my opening tale,
 That same November gale once more
 Whirls the dry leaves on Yarrow shore.

Their vex'd boughs streaming to the sky,
 Once more our naked birches sigh,
 And Blackhouse heights, and Ettrick Pen,
 Have donn'd their wintry shrouds again :
 And mountain dark, and flooded mead,
 Bid us forsake the banks of Tweed.
 Earlier than wont along the sky,
 Mix'd with the rack, the snow mists fly
 The shepherd, who in summer sun,
 Had something of our envy won,
 As thou with pencil, I with pen,
 The features traced of hill and glen :—
 He who, outstretch'd the livelong day,
 At ease among the heath-flowers lay,
 View'd the light clouds with vacant look,
 Or slumber'd o'er his tatter'd book,
 Or idly busied him to guide
 His angle o'er the lessen'd tide :—
 At midnight now, the snowy plain
 Finds sterner labour for the swain.

When red hath set the beamless sun,
 Through heavy vapours dark and dun ;
 When the tired ploughman, dry and warm,
 Hears half-asleep, the rising storm
 Hurling the hail, and sleeted rain,
 Against the casement's tinkling pane ;
 The sounds that drive wild deer, and fox,
 To shelter in the brake and rocks,
 Are warnings which the shepherd ask
 To dismal and to dangerous task.
 Oft he looks forth, and hopes, in vain,
 The blast may sink in mellowing rain ;
 Till, dark above, and white below,
 Decided drives the flaky snow,
 And forth the hardy swain must go.
 Long, with dejected look and whine,
 To leave the hearth his dogs repine ;
 Whistling and cheering them to aid,
 Around his back he weathes the plaid :
 His flock he gathers, and he guides,
 To open downs, and mountain-sides,
 Where fiercest though the tempest blow.
 Least deeply lies the drift below.
 The blast, that whistles o'er the fells,
 Stiffens his locks to icicles ;
 Oft he looks back, while streaming far,
 His cottage window seems a star,—
 Loses its feeble gleam,—and then
 Turns patient to the blast again,
 And, facing to the tempest's sweep,
 Drives through the gloom his lagging sheep.
 If fails his heart, if his limbs fail,
 Benumbing death is in the gale :

His paths, his landmarks, all unknown,
 Close to the hut no more his own,
 Close to the aid he sought in vain,
 The morn may find the stiffen'd swain :⁴¹
 The widow sees, at dawning pale,
 His orphans raise their feeble wail ;
 And, close beside him, in the snow,
 Poor Yarrow, partner of their woe,
 Couches upon his master's breast,
 And licks his cheeks to break his rest.

Who envies now the shepherd's lot,
 His healthy fare, his rural cot,
 His summer couch by greenwood tree,
 His rustic kirk's^a loud revelry,
 His native hill-notes tuned on high,
 To Marion of the blithesome eye ;
 His crook, his scrip, his oaten reed,
 And all Arcadia's golden creed ?

Changes not so with us, my Skene,
 Of human life the varying scene ?
 Our youthful summer oft we see
 Dance by on wings of game and glee,
 While the dark storm reserves its rage,
 Against the winter of our age :
 As he, the ancient Chief of Troy,
 His manhood spent in peace and joy ;
 But Grecian fires, and loud alarms,
 Call'd ancient Priam forth to arms.
 Then happy those, since each must drain
 His share of pleasure, share of pain,—
 Then happy those, beloved of Heaven,
 To whom the mingled cup is given ;
 Whose lenient sorrows find relief,
 Whose joys are chasten'd by their grief.
 And such a lot, my Skene, was thine,
 When thou, of late, wert doom'd to twine,—
 Just when thy bridal hour was by,—
 The cypress with the myrtle tie.
 Just on thy bride her Sire had smiled,
 And bless'd the union of his child,
 When love must change its joyous cheer
 And wipe affection's filial tear.
 Nor did the actions next his end,
 Speak more the father than the friend :
 Scarce had lamented Forbes⁴² paid
 The tribute to his Minstrel's shade ;
 The tale of friendship scarce was told,
 Ere the narrator's heart was cold.—
 Far may we search before we find
 A heart so manly and so kind !
 But not around his honour'd urn,
 Shall friends alone and kindred mourn ;

^a The Scottish Harvest-home.

The thousand eyes his care had dried,
 Pour at his name a bitter tide;
 And frequent falls the grateful dew,
 For benefits the world ne'er knew.
 If mortal charity dare claim
 The Almighty's attributed name,
 Inscribe above his mouldering clay,
 "The widow's shield, the orphan's stay."
 Nor, though it wake thy sorrow, deem
 My verse intrudes on this sad theme;
 For sacred was the pen that wrote,
 "Thy father's friend forget thou not:"
 And grateful title may I plead,
 For many a kindly word and deed,
 To bring my tribute to his grave:—
 'Tis little—but 'tis all I have.

To thee, perchance, this rambling strain
 Recalls our summer walks again;
 When, doing nought,—and, to speak true,
 Not anxious to find aught to do,—
 The wild unbounded hills we ranged,
 While oft our talk its topic changed,
 And, desultory as our way,
 Ranged, unconfined, from grave to gay.
 Even when it flagg'd, as oft will chance
 No effort made to break its trance,
 We could right pleasantly pursue
 Our sports in social silence too;
 Thou gravely labouring to pourtray
 The blighted oak's fantastic spray;
 I spelling o'er, with much delight,
 The legend of that antique knight,
 Tirante by name, yclep'd the White.
 At either's feet a trusty squire,
 Pandour and Camp,^a with eyes of fire,
 Jealous, each other's motions view'd,
 And scarce suppress'd their ancient feud.
 The laverock whistled from the cloud;
 The stream was lively, but not loud;
 From the white thorn the May-flower shed
 Its dewy fragrance round our head:
 Not Ariel lived more merrily
 Under the blossom'd bough, than we.

And blithesome nights, too, have been ours,
 When Winter stript the summer's bowers.
 Careless we heard, what now I hear,
 The wild blast sighing deep and drear,
 When fires were bright, and lamps beam'd gay,
 And ladies tuned the lovely lay,
 And he was held a laggard soul,
 Who shunn'd to quaff the sparkling bowl.

^a *Camp* was a favourite dog of the Poet's, a bull-terrier of extraordinary sagacity.

Then he, whose absence we deplore,
 Who breathes the gales of Devon's shore,
 The longer miss'd bewail'd the more;
 And thou, and I, and dear-loved Rae,
 And one whose name I may not say,—
 For not Mimosa's tender tree
 Shrinks sooner from the touch than he,—
 In merry chorus well combined,
 With laughter drown'd the whistling wind.
 Mirth was within; and Care without
 Might gnaw her nails to hear our shout.
 Not but amid the buxom scene
 Some grave discourse might intervene—
 Of the good horse that bore him best,
 His shoulder, hoof, and arching crest:
 For, like mad Tom's, our chiefest care,
 Was horse to ride, and weapon wear.
 Such nights we've had; and, though the game
 Of manhood be more sober tame,
 And though the field-day, or the drill
 Seem less important now—yet still
 Such may we hope to share again.
 The sprightly thought inspires my strain!
 And mark, how like a horseman true,
 Lord Marmion's march I thus renew.

CANTO FOURTH.

The Camp.

I.

EUSTACE, I said, did blithely mark
 The first notes of the merry lark.
 The lark sang shrill, the cock he crew,
 And loudly Marmion's bugles blew,
 And with their light and lively call,
 Brought groom and yeoman to the stall.
 Whistling they came, and free of heart,
 But soon their mood was changed;
 Complaint was heard on every part,
 Of something disarranged.
 Some clamour'd loud for armour lost;
 Some brawl'd and wrangled with the host;
 "By Becket's bones," cried one, "I fear,
 That some false Scot has stolen my spear!"—
 Young Blount, Lord Marmion's second squire,
 Found his steed wet with sweat and mire;

Although the rated horse-boy sware,
 Last night he dress'd him sleek and fair.
 While chafed the impatient squire like thunder,
 Old Hubert shouts, in fear and wonder,—
 "Help, gentle Blount! help, comrades all!
 Bevis lies dying in his stall:
 To Marmion who the plight dare tell,
 Of the good steed he loves so well?"
 Gaping for fear and ruth, they saw
 The charger panting on his straw;
 Till one who would seem wisest, cried,—
 "What else but evil could betide,
 With that cursed Palmer for our guide?
 Better we had through mire and bush
 Been lantern-led by Friar Rush."⁴³

II.

Fitz-Eustace, who the cause but guess'd,
 Nor wholly understood,
 His comrades' clamorous complaints suppress'd;
 He knew Lord Marmion's mood.
 Him, ere he issued forth, he sought,
 And found deep plunged in gloomy thought,
 And did his tale display
 Simply as if he knew of nought
 To cause such disarray.
 Lord Marmion gave attention cold,
 Nor marvell'd at the wonders told,—
 Pass'd them as accidents of course,
 And bade his clarions sound to horse.

III.

Young Henry Blount, meanwhile, the cost
 Had reckon'd with their Scottish host;
 And, as the charge he cast and paid,
 "Ill thou deserv'st thy hire," he said;
 "Dost see, thou knave, my horse's plight?
 Fairies have ridden him all the night,
 And left him in a foam!
 I trust that soon a conjuring band,
 With English cross, and blazing brand,
 Shall drive the devils from this land,
 To their infernal home:
 For in this haunted den, I trow,
 All night they trample to and fro."
 The laughing host look'd on the hire,—
 "Gramercy, gentle southern squire,
 And if thou comest among the rest,
 With Scottish broadsword to be blest,
 Sharp be the brand, and sure the blow,
 And short the pang to undergo."
 Here stay'd their talk,—for Marmion
 Gave now the signal to set on.
 The Palmer showing forth the way,
 They journey'd all the morning day.

IV.

The green-sward way was smooth and good,
Through Humble's and through Saltoun's wood;
A forest glade, which, varying still,
Here gave a view of dale and hill,
There narrower closed, till over head
A vaulted screen the branches made.
"A pleasant path," Fitz-Eustace said;
"Such as where errant-knights might see
Adventures of high chivalry;
Might meet some damsel flying fast,
With hair unbound, and looks aghast;
And smooth and level course were here,
In her defence to break a spear.
Here, too, are twilight nooks and dells;
And oft, in such, the story tells,
The damsel kind, from danger freed,
Did grateful pay her champion's meed."
He spoke to cheer Lord Marmion's mind:
Perchance to show his lore design'd;

For Eustace much had pored
Upon a huge romantic tome,
In the hall-window of his home,
Imprinted at the antique dome
Of Caxton, or De Worde,
Therefore he spoke,—but spoke in vain,
For Marmion answer'd nought again.

V.

Now sudden, distant trumpets shrill,
In notes prolong'd by wood and hill,
Were heard to echo far;
Each ready archer grasp'd his bow,
But by the flourish soon they know,
They breathed no point of war.
Yet cautious, as in foeman's land,
Lord Marmion's order speeds the band,
Some opener ground to gain;
And scarce a furlong had they rode,
When thinner trees, receding, show'd
A little woodland plain.
Just in that advantageous glade,
The halting troop a line had made,
As forth from the opposing shade
Issued a gallant train.

VI.

First came the trumpets, at whose clang
So late the forest echoes rang;
On prancing steeds they forward press'd,
With scarlet mantle, azure vest;
Each at his trump a banner wore,
Which Scotland's royal scutcheon bore:
Heralds and pursuivants, by name
Bute, Islay, Marchmount, Rothsay, came

In painted tabards, proudly showing
 Gules, Argent, Or, and Azure glowing,
 Attendant on a King-at-arms,
 Whose hand the armorial truncheon held,
 That feudal strife had often quell'd,
 When wildest its alarms.

VII.

He was a man of middle age;
 In aspect manly, grave, and sage,
 As on King's errand come;
 But in the glances of his eye,
 A penetrating, keen, and sly
 Expression found its home;
 The flash of that satiric rage,
 Which, bursting on the early stage,
 Branded the vices of the age,
 And broke the keys of Rome.
 On milk-white palfrey forth he paced;
 His cap of maintenance was graced
 With the proud heron-plume.
 From his steed's shoulder, loin, and breast,
 Silk housings swept the ground,
 With Scotland's arms, device, and crest,
 Embroider'd round and round.
 The double tressure might you see,
 First by Achaius borne,
 The thistle and the fleur-de-lis,
 And gallant unicorn.
 So bright the King's armorial coat,
 That scarce the dazzled eye could note,
 In living colours, blazon'd brave,
 The Lion, which his title gave;
 A train, which well beseem'd his state,
 But all unarm'd around him wait.
 Still is thy name in high account,
 And still thy verse has charms,
 Sir David Lindesay of the Mount,
 Lord Lion King-at-arms!

VIII.

Down from his horse did Marmion spring,
 Soon as he saw the Lion-King;
 For well the stately Baron knew
 To him such courtesy was due,
 Whom royal James himself had crown'd,
 And on his temples placed the round
 Of Scotland's ancient diadem:
 And wet his brow with hallow'd wine,
 And on his finger given to shine
 The emblematic gem.
 Their mutual greetings duly made,
 The Lion thus his message said:—
 "Though Scotland's King hath deeply sworn
 Ne'er to knit faith with Henry more,

And strictly hath forbid resort
 From England to his royal court;
 Yet, for he knows Lord Marmion's name,
 And honours much his warlike fame,
 My liege hath deem'd it shame, and lack
 Of courtesy, to turn him back;
 And, by his order, I, your guide,
 Must lodging fit and fair provide,
 Till finds King James meet time to see
 The flower of English chivalry."

IX.

Though inly chafed at this delay.
 Lord Marmion bears it as he may.
 The Palmer, his mysterious guide,
 Beholding thus his place supplied,
 Sought to take leave in vain:
 Strict was the Lion-King's command,
 That none, who rode in Marmion's band,
 Should sever from the train:
 "England has here enow of spies
 In Lady Heron's witching eyes:"
 To Marchmount thus, apart, he said,
 But fair pretext to Marmion made.
 The right-hand path they now decline,
 And trace against the stream the Tyne.

X.

At length up that wild dale they wind,
 Where Crichtoun Castle⁴⁴ crowns the bank
 For there the Lion's care assign'd
 A lodging meet for Marmion's rank.
 That Castle rises on the steep
 Of the green vale of Tyne:
 And far beneath, where slow they creep,
 From pool to eddy, dark and deep,
 Where alders moist, and willows weep,
 You hear her streams repine.
 The towers in different ages rose;
 Their various architecture shows
 The builders' various hands;
 A mighty mass, that could oppose,
 When deadliest hatred fired its foes,
 The vengeful Douglas bands.

XI.

Crichtoun! though now thy miry court
 But pens the lazy steer and sheep,
 Thy turrets rude, and totter'd Keep,
 Have been the minstrel's loved resort.
 Oft have I traced, within thy fort,
 Of mouldering shields the mystic senso,
 Scutcheons of honour, or pretence,
 Quarter'd in old armorial sort.
 Remains of rude magnificence.

Nor wholly yet had time defaced
 Thy lordly gallery fair;
 Nor yet the stony cord unbraced,
 Whose twisted knots, with roses laced,
 Adorn thy ruin'd stair.
 Still rises unimpair'd below,
 The court-yard's graceful portico;
 Above its cornice, row and row
 Of fair hewn facets richly show
 Their pointed diamond form,
 Though there but houseless cattle go,
 To shield them from the storm.
 And, shuddering, still may we explore,
 Where oft whilom were captives pent,
 The darkness of thy Massy More;^a
 Or, from thy grass-grown battlement,
 May trace, in undulating line,
 The sluggish mazes of the Tyne.

XII.

Another aspect Crichtoun show'd,
 As through its portal Marmion rode;
 But yet 'twas melancholy state
 Received him at the outer gate;
 For none were in the Castle then,
 But women, boys, or aged men.
 With eyes scarce dried, the sorrowing dame,
 To welcome noble Marmion, came;
 Her son, a stripling twelve years old,
 Proffer'd the Baron's rein to hold;
 For each man that could draw a sword
 Had march'd that morning with their lord,
 Earl Adam Hepburn,—he who died
 On Flodden, by his sovereign's side:⁴⁵
 Long may his Lady look in vain!
 She ne'er shall see his gallant train
 Come sweeping back through Crichtoun-Dean.
 'Twas a brave race, before the name
 Of hated Bothwell stain'd their fame.

XIII.

And here two days did Marmion rest,
 With every rite that honour claims,
 Attended as the King's own guest;—
 Such the command of Royal James,
 Who marshall'd then his land's array,
 Upon the Borough-moor that lay.
 Perchance he would not foeman's eye
 Upon his gathering host should pry,
 Till full prepared was every band
 To march against the English land.
 Here while they dwelt, did Lindesay's wit
 Oft cheer the Baron's moodier fit;

^a The pit, or prison vault.—See Appendix, Note 44.

And, in his turn, he knew to prize
 Lord Marmion's powerful mind, and wise,—
 Train'd in the lore of Rome and Greece,
 And policies of war and peace.

XIV.

It chanced, as fell the second night,
 That on the battlements they walk'd,
 And, by the slowly fading light,
 Of varying topics talked;
 And, unaware, the Herald-bard
 Said, Marmion might his toil have spared,
 In travelling so far;
 For that a messenger from heaven
 In vain to James had counsel given
 Against the English war;⁴⁰
 And, closer question'd, thus he told
 A tale, which chronicles of old
 In Scottish story have enroll'd:—

XV.

Sir David Lindsay's Tale.

Of all the palaces so fair,
 Built for the royal dwelling,
 In Scotland far beyond compare,
 Linlithgow is excelling;
 And in its park, in jovial June,
 How sweet the merry linnet's tune,
 How blithe the blackbird's lay!
 The wild-buck bells⁴¹ from ferny brake,
 The coot dives merry on the lake;
 The saddest heart might pleasure take
 To see all nature gay:
 But June is, to our Sovereign dear,
 The heaviest month in all the year:
 Too well his cause of grief you know.—
 June saw his father's overthrow.⁴²
 Woe to the traitors, who could bring
 The princely boy against his King!
 Still in his conscience burns the sting.
 In offices as strict as Lent,
 King James's June is ever spent.

XVI.

When last this ruthful month was come,
 And in Linlithgow's holy dome
 The King, as wont, was praying;
 While, for his royal father's soul,
 The chanters sung, the bells did toll,
 The Bishop mass was saying—
 For now the year brought round again
 The day the luckless king was slain—
 In Katharine's aisle the Monarch knelt,
 With sackcloth-shirt and iron belt,

And eyes with sorrow streaming;
 Around him, in their stalls of state,
 The Thistle's Knight-Companions sate,
 Their banners o'er them beaming.
 I too was there, and, sooth to tell,
 Bedeafen'd with the jangling knell,
 Was watching where the sunbeams fell,
 Through the stain'd casement gleaming;
 But, while I marked what next befell,
 It seem'd as I were dreaming.
 Stepp'd from the crowd a ghostly wight,
 In azure gown, with cincture white;
 His forehead bald, his head was bare,
 Down hung at length his yellow hair.—
 Now, mock me not, when, good my Lord,
 I pledge to you my knightly word,
 That, when I saw his placid grace,
 His simple majesty of face,
 His solemn bearing, and his pace
 So stately gliding on,
 Seem'd to me ne'er did limner paint
 So just an image of the Saint,
 Who propp'd the Virgin in her faint,—
 The loved Apostle John!

XVII.

"He stepp'd before the Monarch's chair,
 And stood with rustic plainness there,
 And little reverence made;
 Nor head, nor body, bow'd nor bent,
 But on the desk his arm he leant,
 And words like these he said,
 In a low voice—but never tone
 So thrill'd through vein, and nerve, and bone:—
 'My mother sent me from afar,
 Sir King, to warn thee not to war,—
 Woe waits on thine array;
 If war thou wilt, of woman fair,
 Her witching wiles and wanton snare,
 James Stuart, doubly warn'd, beware:
 God keep thee as he may!'—
 The wondering Monarch seem'd to seek
 For answer, and found none;
 And when he raised his head to speak,
 The monitor was gone.
 The Marshal and myself had cast
 To stop him as he outward pass'd;
 But, lighter than the whirlwind's blast,
 He vanish'd from our eyes,
 Like sunbeam on the billow cast,
 That glances but, and dies."

XVIII.

While Lindesay told his marvel strange,
 The twilight was so pale,

He mark'd not Marmion's colour change,
 While listening to the tale;
 But, after a suspended pause,
 The Baron spoke:—"Of Nature's laws
 So strong I held the force,
 That never superhuman cause
 Could e'er control their course.
 And, three days since, had judg'd your aim
 Was but to make your guest your game.
 But I have seen, since past the Tweed,
 What much has changed my sceptic creed,
 And made me credit aught—" He staid,
 And seem'd to wish his words unsaid:
 But, by that strong emotion press'd,
 Which prompts us to unload our breast,
 Even when discovery's pain,
 To Lindesay did at length unfold
 The tale his village host had told,
 At Gifford, to his train.
 Nought of the Palmer says he there,
 And nought of Constance or of Clare;
 The thoughts which broke his sleep, he seems
 To mention but as feverish dreams.

XIX.

"In vain," said he, "to rest I spread
 My burning limbs, and couch'd my head:
 Fantastic thoughts returned;
 And, by their wild dominion led,
 My heart within me burn'd.
 So sore was the delirious goad,
 I took my steed, and forth I rode,
 And, as the moon shone bright and cold,
 Soon reach'd the camp upon the wold.
 The southern entrance I pass'd through,
 And halted, and my bugle blew.
 Methought an answer met my ear,—
 Yet was the blast so low and drear,
 So hollow, and so faintly blown,
 It might be echo of my own.

XX.

"Thus judging, for a little space
 I listen'd, ere I left the place;
 But scarce could trust my eyes,
 Nor yet can think they served me true,
 When sudden in the ring I view,
 In form distinct of shape and hue,
 A mounted champion rise.—
 I've fought, Lord-Lion, many a day,
 In single fight, and mix'd affray,
 And ever, I myself my say,
 Have borne me as a knight;
 But when this unexpected foe
 Seem'd starting from the gulf below.—

I care not though the truth I show,—
I trembled with affright;
And as I placed in rest my spear,
My hand so shook for very fear,
I scarce could couch it right.

XXI.

"Why need my tongue the issue tell?
We ran our course,—my charger fell;—
What could he 'gainst the shock of hell?—
I roll'd upon the plain.
High o'er my head, with threatening hand,
The spectre shook his naked brand,—
Yet did the worst remain:
My dazzled eyes I upward cast,—
Not opening hell itself could blast
Their sight, like what I saw!
Full on his face the moonbeam strook,—
A face could never be mistook!
I knew the stern vindictive look,
And held my breath for awe.
I saw the face of one who, fled
To foreign climes, has long been dead,
I well believe the last;
For ne'er, from vizar raised, did stare
A human warrior, with a glare
So grimly and so ghast.
Thrice o'er my head he shook the blade;
But when to good Saint George I pray'd,
(The first time e'er I ask'd his aid,)
He plunged it in the sheath;
And, on his courser mounting light,
He seem'd to vanish from my sight:
The moonbeam droop'd, and deepest night
Sunk down upon the heath.—
"Twere long to tell what cause I have
To know his face, that met me there,
Call'd by his hatred from the grave,
To cumber upper air:
Dead or alive, good cause had he
To be my mortal enemy."

XXII.

Marvell'd Sir David of the Mount;
Then, learn'd in story, 'gan recount
Such chance had happ'd of old,
When once, near Norham, there did fight
A spectre fell of fiendish might,
In likeness of a Scottish knight,
With Brian Bulmer bold,
And train'd him nigh to disallow
The aid of his baptismal vow.
* And such a phantom, too, 'tis said,
With Highland broadsword, targe, and plaid.
And fingers red with gore,

Is seen in Rothiemurcus' glade,
 Or where the sable pine-trees shade
 Dark Tomantoul and Auchnaslaid,
 Dromouchty, or Glenmore."
 And yet, whate'er such legends say,
 Of warlike demon, ghost, or fay,
 On mountain, moor, or plain,
 Spotless in faith, in bosom bold,
 True son of chivalry should hold
 These midnight terrors vain;
 For seldom hath such spirits power
 To harm, save in the evil hour,
 When guilt we meditate within,
 Or harbour unrepented sin."
 Lord Marmion turn'd him half aside,
 And twice to clear his voice he tried,
 Then press'd Sir David's hand,—
 But nought, at length, in answer said,
 And here their farther converse staid,
 Each ordering that his band
 Should bowne them with the rising day,
 To Scotland's camp to take their way,—
 Such was the King's command.

XXIII.

Early they took Dun-Edin's road,
 And I could trace each step they trode:
 Hill, brook, nor dell, nor rock, nor stone.
 Lies on the path to me unknown.
 Much might it boast of storied lore;
 But, passing such digression o'er,
 Suffice it that the rout was laid
 Across the furzy hills of Braid.
 They pass'd the glen and scanty rill,
 And climbed the opposing bank, until
 They gain'd the top of Blackford Hill.

XXIV.

Blackford! on whose uncultured breast,
 Among the broom, and thorn, and whin,
 A truant-boy, I sought the nest,
 Or listed, as I lay at rest,
 While rose on breezes thin,
 The murmur of the city crowd,
 And, from his steeple jangling loud,
 Saint Giles's mingling din.
 Now, from the summit to the plain,
 Waves all the hill with yellow grain;
 And o'er the landscape as I look,
 Nought do I see unchanged remain,
 Save the rude cliffs and chiming brook.

* See the traditions concerning the spectre called *Lhamdeary*, or *Bloody hand*, in a note on Canto iii., Appendix, Note 40.

To me they make a heavy moan,
Of early friendships past and gone,

XXV.

But different far the change has been,
Since Marmion, from the crown
Of Blackford, saw that martial scene
Upon the bent so brown :
Thousand pavilions, white as snow,
Spread all the Borough-moor below,^a
Upland, and dale, and down :—
A thousand, did I say ? I ween,
Thousands on thousands, there were seen,
That chequer'd all the heath between
The streamlet and the town ;
In crossing ranks extending far,
Forming a camp irregular ;
Oft giving way, where still there stood
Some relics of the old oak wood,
That darkly huge did intervene,
And tamed the glaring white with green :
In these extended lines there lay,
A martial kingdom's vast array.

XXVI.

For from Hebudes, dark with rain,
To eastern Lodon's fertile plain,
And from the southern Redswire edge,
To farthest Rosse's rocky ledge ;
From west to east, from south to north,
Scotland sent all her warriors forth.
Marmion might hear the mingled hum
Of myriads up the mountain come ;
The horses' tramp, and tingling clank,
Where chiefs review'd their vassal rank,
And charger's shrilling neigh ;
And see the shifting lines advance,
While frequent flash'd, from shield and lance,
The sun's reflected ray.

XXVII.

Thin curling in the morning air,
The wreaths of failing smoke declare
To embers now the brands decay'd,
Where the night-watch their fires had made.
They saw, slow rolling on the plain,
Full many a baggage-cart and wain,
And dire artillery's clumsy car,
By sluggish oxen tugg'd to war ;
And there were Borthwick's sisters seven,^a
And culverins which France had given.
Ill-omen'd gift ! the guns remain
The conqueror's spoil on Flodden plain.

^a Seven culverins so called, cast by one Borthwick.

XXVIII.

Nor mark'd they less, where in the air
 A thousand streamers flaunted fair;
 Various in shape, device, and hue,
 Green, sanguine, purple, red, and blue,
 Broad, narrow, swallow-tailed, and square,
 Scroll, pennon, pensil, bandrol,^a there
 O'er the pavilions flew.
 Highest and midmost, was descried
 The royal banner floating wide;
 The staff, a pine-tree, strong and straight,
 Pitch'd deeply in a massive stone,
 Which still in memory is shown,
 Yet bent beneath the standard's weight
 Whene'er the western wind unroll'd,
 With toil, the huge and cumbrous fold,
 And gave to view the dazzling field,
 Where, in proud Scotland's royal shield,
 The ruddy lion ramp'd in gold.⁵⁰

XXIX.

Lord Marmion view'd the landscape bright,—
 He view'd it with a chief's delight,—
 Until within him burn'd his heart,
 And lightning from his eye did part,
 As on the battle-day;
 Such glance did falcon never dart,
 When stooping on his prey.
 "Oh! well, Lord-Lion, hast thou said,
 Thy King from warfare to dissuade
 Were but a vain essay:
 For, by St George, were that host mine,
 Not power infernal nor divine,
 Should once to peace my soul incline,
 Till I had dimm'd their armour's shine
 In glorious battle-fray!"
 Answer'd the Bard, of milder mood,—
 "Fair is the sight,—and yet 'twere good,
 That kings would think withal,
 When peace and wealth their land has bless'd,
 'Tis better to sit still at rest,
 Then rise, perchance to fall."

XXX.

Still on the spot Lord Marmion stay'd,
 For fairer scene he ne'er survey'd.
 When sat'd with the martial show
 That peopled all the plain below,
 The wandering eye could o'er it go,
 And mark the distant city glow
 With gloomy splendour red;

^a Each of these feudal ensigns intimated the different rank of those entitled to display them.

For on the smoke-wreaths, huge and slow
That round her sable turrets flow,
The morning beams were shed,
And tinged them with a lustre proud,
Like that which streaks a thunder-cloud.
Such dusky grandeur clothed the height,
Where the huge Castle holds its state,
And all the steep slope down,
Whose ridgy back heaves to the sky,
Piled deep and massy, close and high,
Mine own romantic town!
But northward far, with purer blaze,
On Ochil mountains fell the rays,
And as each heathy top they kissed,
It gleam'd a purple amethyst.
Yonder the shores of Fife you saw;
Here Preston-Bay and Berwick-Law:
And, broad between them roll'd,
The gallant Frith the eye might note,
Whose islands on its bosom float,
Like emeralds chased in gold.
Fitz-Eustace' heart felt closely pent;
As if to give his rapture vent,
The spur he to his charger lent,
And raised his bridle hand,
And making demi-volte in air,
Cried, "Where's the coward that would not dare
To fight for such a land!"
The Lindesay smiled his joy to see;
Nor Marmion's frown repress'd his glee.

XXXI.

Thus while they look'd, a flourish proud,
Where mingled trump, and clarion loud,
And fife, and kettle-drum,
And sacbut deep, and psaltery,
And war-pipe with discordant cry,
And cymbal clattering to the sky,
Making wild music bold and high,
Did up the mountain come;
The whilst the bells, with distant chime,
Merrily toll'd the hour of prime,
And thus the Lindesay spoke:
"Thus clamour still the war-notes when
The King to mass his way has ta'en,
Or to St Katharine's of Sienne,
Or Chapel of Saint Rocque.
To you they speak of martial fame;
But me remind of peaceful game,
When blither was their cheer,
Thrilling in Falkland-woods the air,
In signal none his steed should spare,
But strive which foremost might repair
To the downfall of the deer.

XXXII.

"Nor less," he said,—“when looking forth,
 I view yon Empress of the North
 Sit on her hilly throne;
 Her palace's imperial bowers,
 Her castle, proof to hostile powers,
 Her stately halls and holy towers—
 Nor less," he said, "I moan,
 To think what woe mischance may bring,
 And how these merry bells may ring
 The death-dirge of our gallant King;
 Or with the larum call
 The burghers forth to watch and ward,
 'Gainst southern sack and fires to guard
 Dun-Edin's leaguer'd wall.—
 But not for my presaging thought,
 Dream conquest sure, or cheaply bought!
 Lord Marmion, I say nay:
 God is the guider of the field,
 He breaks the champion's spear and shield,—
 But thou thyself shalt say,
 When joins yon host in deadly stowre,
 That England's dames must weep in bower,
 Her monks the death-mass sing;
 For never saw'st thou such a power
 Led on by such a King."—
 And now, down winding to the plain,
 The barriers of the camp they gain,
 And there they made a stay.—
 There stays the Minstrel, till he fling
 His hand o'er every Border string,
 And fit his harp, the pomp to sing
 Of Scotland's ancient Court and King,
 In the succeeding lay.

Introduction to Canto Fifth.

To GEORGE ELLIS, Esq.

Edinburgh.

WHEN dark December glooms the day,
 And takes our autumn joys away;
 When short and scant the sunbeam throws,
 Upon the weary waste of snows,
 A cold and profitless regard,
 Like patron on a needy bard;

When silvan occupation's done,
 And o'er the chimney rests the gun,
 And hang, in idle trophy, near,
 The game-pouch, fishing-rod, and spear;
 When wiry terrier, rough and grim,
 And greyhound, with his length of limb,
 And pointer, now employ'd no more.
 Cumber our parlour's narrow floor;
 When in his stall the impatient steed
 Is long condemn'd to rest and feed;
 When from our snow-encircled home,
 Scarce cares the hardest step to roam,
 Since path is none, save that to bring
 The needful water from the spring;
 When wrinkled news-page, thrice conn'd o'er,
 Beguiles the dreary hour no more,
 And darkling politician, cross'd,
 Inveighs against the lingering post,
 And answering housewife sore complains
 Of carriers' snow-impeded wains;—
 When such the country cheer, I come,
 Well pleased, to seek our city home;
 For converse, and for books, to change
 The Forest's melancholy range,
 And welcome, with renew'd delight,
 The busy day and social night.

Not here need my desponding rhyme
 Lament the ravages of time,
 As erst by Newark's riven towers,
 And Ettrick stripp'd of forest bowers.
 True,—Caledonia's Queen is changed,⁵¹
 Since on her dusky summit ranged,
 Within its steepy limits pent,
 By bulwark, line, and battlement,
 And flanking towers, and laký flood,
 Guarded and garrison'd she stood,
 Denying entrance or resort,
 Save at each tall embattled port;
 Above whose arch, suspended, hung
 Portcullis spiked with iron prong.
 That long is gone,—but not so long,
 Since, early closed, and opening late,
 Jealous revolved the studded gate,
 Whose task, from eve to morning tide,
 A wicket churlishly supplied.
 Stern then, and steel-girt was thy brow,
 Dun-Edin! O, how alter'd now,
 When safe amid thy mountain court
 Thou sit'st, like Empress at her sport,
 And liberal, unconfined, and free,
 Flinging thy white arms to the sea,
 For thy dark cloud, with umber'd lower,
 That hung o'er cliff, and lake, and tower,

Thou gleam'st against the western ray
Ten thousand lines of brighter day.

Not she, the Championess of old,
In Spenser's magic tale enroll'd,—
She for the charmed spear renown'd,
Which forced each knight to kiss the ground,—
Not she more changed, when, placed at rest,
What time she was Malbecco's guest,^a
She gave to flow her maiden vest;
When from the corslet's grasp relieved,
Free to the sight her bosom heaved;
Sweet was her blue eye's modest smile,
Erst hidden by the aventayle;
And down her shoulders graceful roll'd
Her locks profuse, of paly gold.
They who whilom, in midnight fight,
Had marvell'd at her matchless might,
No less her maiden charms approved,
But looking liked, and liking loved.
The sight could jealous pangs beguile,
And charm Malbecco's cares a while;
And he, the wandering Squire of Dames,
Forgot his Columbella's claims,
And passion, erst unknown, could gain
The breast of blunt Sir Satyrane;
Nor durst light Paridel advance,
Bold as he was, a looser glance.
She charm'd, at once, and tamed the heart,
Incomparable Britomarte!

So thou, fair City! disarray'd
Of battled wall, and rampart's aid,
As stately seem'st, but lovelier far
Than in that panoply of war.
Nor deem that from thy fenceless throne
Strength and security are flown;
Still, as of yore, Queen of the North!
Still canst thou send thy children forth.
Ne'er readier at alarm-bell's call
Thy burghers rose to man thy wall,
Than now, in danger, shall be thine,
Thy dauntless voluntary line;
For fosse and turret proud to stand,
Their breasts the bulwarks of the land.
Thy thousands, train'd to martial toil,
Full red would stain their native soil.
Ere from thy mural crown there fell
The slightest knosp, or pinnacle.
And if it come,—as come it may,
Dun-Edin! that eventful day,—
Renown'd for hospitable deed,
That virtue much with Heaven may plead

^a See "The Fairy Queen," book iii. canto ix.

In patriarchal times whose care
 Descending angels deign'd to share;
 That claim may wrestle blessings down
 On those who fight for The Good Town,
 Destined in every age to be
 Refuge of injured royalty;
 Since first, when conquering York arose,
 To Henry meek she gave repose,
 Till late, with wonder, grief, and awe,
 Great Bourbon's relics, sad she saw.

Truce to these thoughts!—for, as they rise,
 How gladly I avert mine eyes,
 Bodings, or true or false, to change,
 For Fiction's fair romantic range,
 Or for tradition's dubious light,
 That hovers 'twixt the day and night:
 Dazzling alternately and dim,
 Her wavering lamp I'd rather trim,
 Knights, squires, and lovely dames to see,
 Creation of my fantasy,
 Than gaze abroad on reeky fen,
 And make of mists invading men.
 Who loves not more the night of June
 Than dull December's gloomy noon;
 The moonlight than the fog of frost?
 And can we say, which cheats the most?

But who shall teach my harp to gain
 A sound of the romantic strain,
 Whose Anglo-Norman tones whilere
 Could win the royal Henry's ear,
 Famed Beauclerc call'd, for that he loved
 The minstrel, and his lay approved?
 Who shall these lingering notes redeem,
 Decaying on Oblivion's stream;
 Such notes as from the Breton tongue
 Marie translated, Blondel sung?—
 O! born, Time's ravage to repair,
 And make the dying Muse thy care;
 Who, when his scythe her hoary foe
 Was poising for the final blow,
 The weapon from his hand could wring,
 And break his glass, and shear his wing,
 And bid, reviving in his strain,
 The gentle poet live again;
 Thou, who canst give to lightest lay
 An unpedantic moral gay,
 Nor less the dullest theme bid flit
 On wings of unexpected wit;
 In letters as in life approved,
 Example honour'd, and beloved,—
 Dear ELLIS! to the bard impart
 A lesson of thy magic art,
 To win at once the head and heart,—

At once to charm, instruct, and mend,
 My guide, my pattern, and my friend !
 Such minstrel lesson to bestow
 Be long thy pleasing task,—but O !
 No more by thy example teach,
 — What few can practise, all can preach,—
 With even patience to endure
 Lingered disease, and painful cure,
 And boast affliction's pangs subdued
 By mild and manly fortitude.
 Enough, the lesson has been given :
 Forbid the repetition, Heaven !

Come listen, then ! for thou hast known.
 And loved the Minstrel's varying tone,
 Who, like his Border sires of old,
 Waked a wild measure rude and bold,
 Till Windsor's oaks, and Ascot plain,
 With wonder heard the northern strain.
 Come listen ! bold in thy applause,
 The Bard shall scorn pedantic laws ;
 And, as the ancient art could stain
 Achievements on the storied pane,
 Irregularly traced and plann'd,
 But yet so glowing and so grand,—
 So shall he strive, in changeful hue,
 Field, feast, and combat, to renew,
 And loves, and arms, and harpers' glee,
 And all the pomp of chivalry.

CANTO FIFTH

The Court.

I.

THE train has left the hills of Braid ;
 The barrier guard have open made
 (So Lindesay bade) the palisade,
 That closed the tented ground ;
 Their men the warders backward drew,
 And carried pikes as they rode through,
 Into its ample bound.
 Fast ran the Scottish warriors there,
 Upon the Southern band to stare.
 And envy with their wonder rose,
 To see such well-appointed foes ;
 Such length of shafts, such mighty bows,

So huge, that many simply thought,
But for a vaunt such weapons wrought;
And little deem'd their force to feel,
Through links of mail, and plates of steel,
When rattling upon Flodden vale,
The cloth-yard arrows flew like hail.⁵²

II.

Nor less did Marmion's skilful view
Glance every line and squadron through
And much he marvell'd one small land
Could marshal forth such various band;
For men-at-arms were here,
Heavily sheathed in mail and plate,
Like iron towers for strength and weight,
On Flemish steeds of bone and height,
With battle-axe and spear.
Young knights and squires, a lighter train,
Practised their chargers on the plain,
By aid of leg, of hand, and rein,
Each warlike feat to show,
To pass, to wheel, the croupe to gain,
And high curvett, that not in vain
The sword sway might descend amain
On foeman's casque below.
He saw the hardy burghers there
March arm'd, on foot, with faces bare,⁵³
For vizor they wore none,
Nor waving plume, nor crest of knight;
But burnished were their corslets bright,
Their brigantines, and gorgets light,
Like very silver shone.
Long pikes they had for standing fight,
Two-handed swords they wore,
And many wielded mace of weight,
And bucklers bright they bore.

III.

On foot the yeoman too, but dress'd
In his steel-jack, a swarthy vest,
With iron quilted well;
Each at his back (a slender store)
His forty days' provision bore,
As feudal statutes tell.
His arms were halbert, axe, or spear,⁵⁴
A crossbow there, a hagbut here,
A dagger-knife, and brand.
Sober he seem'd, and sad of cheer,
As loth to leave his cottage dear,
And march to foreign strand;
Or musing, who would guide his steer,
To till the fallow land.
Yet deem not, in his thoughtful eye
Did aught of dastard terror lie;
More dreadful far his ire,

Then theirs, who, scorning danger's name,
In eager mood to battle came,
Their valour like light straw on flame,
A fierce but fading fire.

IV.

Not so the Borderer :—bred to war,
He knew the battle's din afar,
And joyed to hear it swell.
His peaceful day was slothful ease ;
Nor harp, nor pipe, his ear could please
Like the loud slogan yell.
On active steed, with lance and blade,
The light-arm'd pricker plied his trade, —
Let nobles fight for fame ;
Let vassals follow where they lead,
Burghers to guard their townships bleed,
But war's the Borderer's game.
Their gain, their glory, their delight,
To sleep the day, maraud the night,
O'er mountain, moss, and moor ;
Joyful to fight they took their way,
Scarce caring who might win the day,
Their booty was secure.
These, as Lord Marmion's train pass'd by,
Look'd on at first with careless eye,
Nor marvell'd aught, well taught to know
The form and force of English bow.
But when they saw the Lord array'd
In splendid arms and rich brocade,
Each Borderer to his kinsman said,—
"Hist, Ringan ! seest thou there !
Canst guess which road they'll homeward ride?—
O ! could we but on Border side,
By Eusedale glen, or Liddell's tide,
Beset a prize so fair !
That fangless Lion, too, their guide,
Might chance to lose his glistening hide ;
Brown Maudlin, of that doublet pied,
Could make a kirtle rare."

V.

Next, Marmion mark'd the Celtic race,
Of different language, form, and face,
A various race of man ;
Just then the Chiefs their tribes array'd
And wild and garish semblance made,
The chequer'd trews, and belted plaid,
And varying notes the war-pipes bray'd,
To every varying clan ;
Wild through their red or sable hair
Look'd out their ayes with savage stars,
On Marmion as he pass'd ;
Their legs above the knee were bare ;
Their frame was sinewy, short and spare
And harden'd to the blast

Of taller race, the chiefs they own
 Were by the eagle's plumage known.
 The hunted Red-deer's undress'd hide
 Their hairy buskins well supplied;
 The graceful bonnet deck'd their head:
 Back from their shoulders hung the plaid
 A broadsword of unwieldy length,
 A dagger proved for edge and strength,
 A studded targe they wore,
 And quivers, bows, and shafts,—but O!
 Short was the shaft, and weak the bow,
 To that which England bore.
 The Isles-men carried at their backs
 The ancient Danish battle-axe.
 They raised a wild and wondering cry,
 As with his guide rode Marmion by.
 Loud were their clamouring tongues, as when
 The clanging sea-fowl leave the fen,
 And, with their cries discordant mix'd,
 Grumbled and yell'd the pipes betwixt.

VI.

Thus through the Scottish camp they pass'd.
 And reach'd the City gate at last,
 Where all around, a wakeful guard,
 Arm'd burghers kept their watch and ward.
 Well had they cause of jealous fear,
 When lay encamp'd, in field so near,
 The Borderer and the Mountaineer.
 As through the bustling streets they go,
 All was alive with martial show:
 At every turn, with dinning clang,
 The armourer's anvil clash'd and rang;
 Or toil'd the swarthy smith, to wheel
 The bar that arms the charger's heel;
 Or axe, or falchion, to the side
 Of jarring grindstone was applied.
 Page, groom, and squire, with hurrying pace,
 Through street, and lane, and market-place,
 Bore lance, or casque, or sword;
 While burghers, with important face,
 Described each new-come lord,
 Discuss'd his lineage, told his name,
 His following, and his warlike fame.
 The Lion led to lodging meet,
 Which high o'erlooked the crowded street;
 There must the Baron rest,
 Till past the hour of vesper tide,
 And then to Holy-Rood must ride,—
 Such was the king's behest.
 Meanwhile the Lion's care assigns
 A banquet rich, and costly wines,
 To Marmion and his train;⁵³
 And when the appointed hour succeeds,

The Baron dons his peaceful weeds,
And following Lindesay as he leads,
The palace-halls they gain.

VII.

Old Holy-Rood rung merrily,
That night, with wassell, mirth, and glee:
King James within her princely bower,
Feasted the Chiefs of Scotland's power,
Summon'd to spend the parting hour;
For he had charged, that his array
Should southward march by break of day.
Well loved that splendid Monarch aye
The banquet and the song;
By day the tourney, and by night
The merry dance, traced fast and light,
The maskers quaint, the pageant bright,
The revel loud and long.
This feast outshone his banquets past,
It was his blithest—and his last.
The dazzling lamps, from gallery gay,
Cast on the Court a dancing ray.
Here to the harp did minstrels sing;
There ladies touch'd a softer string;
With long-ear'd cap, and motley vest,
The licensed fool retail'd his jest;
His magic tricks the juggler plied;
At dice and draughts the gallants vied:
While some, in close recess apart,
Court'd the ladies of their heart,
Nor court'd them in vain;
For often, in the parting hour,
Victorious Love asserts his power
O'er coldness and disdain;
And flinty is her heart, can view
To battle march a lover true—
Can hear, perchance, his last adieu,
Nor own her share of pain.

VIII.

Through this mix'd crowd of glee and game,
The King to greet Lord Marmion came,
While, reverent, all made room.
An easy task it was, I trow,
King James's manly form to know.
Although, his courtesy to show,
He doff'd, to Marmion bending low,
His broider'd cap and plume.
For royal was his garb and mien,
His cloak, of crimson velvet piled,
Trimn'd with the fur of martin wild;
His vest of changeful satin sheen,
The dazzled eye beguiled;
His gorgeous collar hung adown,
Wrought with the badge of Scotland's crown.

The thistle brave, of old renown :
 His trusty blade, Toledo right,
 Descended from a baldrick bright ;
 White were his buskins ; on the heel
 His spurs inlaid of gold and steel ;
 His bonnet, all of crimson fair,
 Was button'd with a ruby rare :
 And Marmion deem'd he ne'er had seen
 A prince of such a noble mien.

IX.

The Monarch's form was middle size ;
 For feat of strength, or exercise,
 Shaped in proportion fair ;
 And hazel was his eagle eye,
 And auburn of the darkest dye,
 His short curl'd beard and hair.
 Light was his footstep in the dance,
 And firm his stirrup in the lists ;
 And, oh ! he had that merry glance,
 That seldom lady's heart resists.

Lightly from fair to fair he flew,
 And loved to plead, lament, and sue ; -
 Suit lightly won, and short-lived pain,
 For monarchs seldom sigh in vain.

I said he joy'd in banquet bower ;
 But 'mid his mirth, 'twas often strange,
 How suddenly his cheer would change,
 His look o'ercast and lower,

If, in a sudden turn, he felt
 The pressure of his iron belt,
 That bound his breast in penance pain,
 In memory of his father slain.⁶⁶
 Even so 'twas strange how, evermore,
 Soon as the passing pang was o'er,
 Forward he rush'd, with double glee,
 Into the stream of revelry :

Thus, dim-seen object of affright
 Startles the courser in his flight,
 And half he halts, half springs aside ;
 But feels the quickening spur applied,
 And, straining on the tighten'd rein,
 Scours doubly swift o'er hill and plain.

X.

O'er James's heart, the courtiers say,
 Sir Hugh the Heron's wife held sway :⁶⁷
 To Scotland's Court she came,
 To be a hostage for her lord,
 Who Cessford's gallant heart had gored,
 And with the King to make accord,

Had sent his lovely dame.
 Nor to that lady free alone
 Did the gay King allegiance own ;
 For the fair Queen of France

Sent him a turquois ring and glove,
 And charged him, as her knight and love
 For her to break a lance;
 And strike three strokes with Scottish brand,⁵⁶
 And march three miles on Southron land,
 And bid the banners of his band
 In English breezes dance.
 And thus, for France's Queen he drest
 His manly limbs in mailed vest;
 And thus admitted English fair
 His inmost counsels still to share;
 And thus, for both, he madly plann'd
 The ruin of himself and land!
 And yet, the sooth to tell,
 Nor England's fair, nor France's Queen,
 Were worth one pearl-drop, bright and sheen,
 From Margaret's eyes that fell,—
 His own Queen Margaret, who, in Lithgow's bower
 All lonely sat, and wept the weary hour.

XI.

The Queen sits lone in Lithgow pile,
 And weeps the weary day,
 The war against her native soil,
 Her Monarch's risk in battle broil:—
 And in gay Holy-Rood, the while,
 Dame Heron rises with a smile,
 Upon the harp to play.
 Fair was her rounded arm, as o'er
 The strings her fingers flew;
 And as she touch'd and tuned them all,
 Ever her bosom's rise and fall
 Was plainer given to view;
 For, all for heat, was laid aside
 Her wimple, and her hood untied.
 And first she pitch'd her voice to sing,
 Then glanced her dark eye on the King.
 And then around the silent ring;
 And laugh'd, and blush'd, and oft did say
 Her pretty oath, by Yea, and Nay,
 She could not, would not, durst not play!
 At length, upon the harp, with glee,
 Mingled with arch simplicity,
 A soft, yet lively, air she rung,
 While thus the wily lady sung:—

XII.

LOCHINVAR.

Lady Heron's Song.

O, young Lochinvar is come out of the west,
 Through all the wide border his steed was the best;
 And save his good broadsword, he weapons had none,
 He rode all unarm'd, and he rode all alone.

So faithful in love, and so dauntless in war,
There never was knight like the young Lochinvar.

He staid not for brake, and he stopp'd not for stone,
He swam the Eske river where ford there was none;
But ere he alighted at Netherby gate,
The bride had consented, the gallant came late;
For a laggard in love, and a dastard in war,
Was to wed the fair Ellen of brave Lochinvar.

So coldly he enter'd the Netherby Hall,
Among bride's-men, and kinsmen, and brothers, and all:
Then spoke the bride's father, his hand on his sword,
(For the poor craven bridegroom said never a word),
"O come ye in peace here, or come ye in war,
Or to dance at our bridal, young Lord Lochinvar?"—

"I long woo'd your daughter, my suit you denied;—
Love swells like the Solway, but ebbs like its tide—
And now am I come, with this lost love of mine,
To lead but one measure, drink one cup of wine.
There are maidens in Scotland more lovely by far,
That would gladly be bride to the young Lochinvar."

The bride kiss'd the goblet: the knight took it up,
He quaff'd off the wine, and he threw down the cup.
She look'd down to blush, and she look'd up to sigh,
With a smile on her lips, and a tear in her eye.
He took her soft hand, ere her mother could bar,—
"Now tread we a measure!" said young Lochinvar.

So stately his form, and so lovely her face,
That never a hall such a galliard did grace;
While her mother did fret, and her father did fume,
And the bridegroom stood dangling his bonnet and plume;
And the bride-maidens whisper'd, "T were better by far,
To have match'd our fair cousin with young Lochinvar."

One touch to her hand, and one word in her ear,
When they reach'd the hall-door, and the charger stood near;
So light to the croupe the fair lady he swung,
So light to the saddle before her he sprang!
"She is won! we are gone, over bank, bush, and scaur;
They'll have fleet steeds that follow," quoth young Lochinvar

There was mounting 'mong Græmes of the Netherby clan;
Forsters, Fenwicks, and Musgraves, they rode and they ran;
There was racing and chasing, on Cannobie Lee,
But the lost bride of Netherby ne'er did they see.
So daring in love, and so dauntless in war,
Have ye e'er heard of gallant like young Lochinvar?

XIII.

The Monarch o'er the siren hung
And beat the measure as she sung;

And, pressing closer, and more near,
 He whisper'd praises in her ear.
 In loud applause the courtiers vied;
 And ladies wink'd, and spoke aside.
 The witching dame to Marmion threw
 A glance, where seem'd to reign
 The pride that claims applauses due,
 And of her royal conquest too,
 A real or feign'd disdain:
 Familiar was the look, and told,
 Marmion and she were friends of old.
 The King observed their meeting eyes,
 With something like displeased surprise;
 For monarchs ill can rivals brook,
 Even in a word, or smile, or look.
 Straight took he forth the parchment broad,
 Which Marmion's high commission show'd:
 "Our Borders sack'd by many a raid,
 Our peaceful liegemen robb'd," he said;
 "On day of truce our Warden slain,
 Stout Barton kill'd, his vassals ta'en—
 Unworthy were we here to reign,
 Should these for vengeance cry in vain:
 Our full defiance, hate, and scorn,
 Our herald has to Henry borne."

XIV.

He paused, and led where Douglas stood,
 And with stern eye the pageant view'd:
 I mean that Douglas, sixth of yore,
 Who coronet of Angus bore,
 And, when his blood and heart were high,
 Did the third James in camp defy,
 And all his minions led to die
 On Lauder's dreary flat:
 Princes and favourites long grew tame,
 And trembled at the homely name
 Of Archibald Bell-the-Cat;⁵⁹
 The same who left the dusky vale
 Of Hermitage in Liddisdale,
 Its dungeons and its towers,
 Where Bothwell's turrets brave the air,
 And Bothwell bank is blooming fair,
 To fix his princely bowers.
 Though now, in age, he had laid down
 His armour for the peaceful gown,
 And for a staff his brand,
 Yet often would flash forth the fire,
 That could, in youth, a monarch's ire
 And minion's pride withstand;
 And even that day, at council board,
 Unapt to soothe his sovereign's mood
 Against the war had Angus stood,
 And chafed his royal lord.⁶⁰

XV.

His giant form, like ruin'd tower,
Though fall'n its muscles' brawny vaunt,
Huge-boned, and tall, and grim, and gaunt,
Seem'd o'er the gaudy scene to lower :

His locks and beard in silver grew ;
His eyebrows kept their sable hue.
Near Douglas when the Monarch stood,
His bitter speech he thus pursued :

" Lord Marmion, since these letters say,
That in the North you needs must stay,
While slightest hopes of peace remain,
Uncourteous speech it were, and stern,
To say—Return to Lindisfarne,
Until my herald come again.

Then rest you in Tantallon Hold ;⁶¹
Your host shall be the Douglas bold, —
A chief unlike his sires of old.
He wears their motto on his blade,⁶²
Their blazon o'er his towers display'd ;
Yet loves his sovereign to oppose,
More than to face his country's foes.

And, I bethink me, by St Stephen,
But e'en this morn to me was given
A prize, the first-fruits of the war,
Ta'en by a galley from Dunbar,

A bevy of the maids of Heaven.
Under your guard, these holy maids
Shall safe return to cloister shades,
And, while they at Tantallon stay,
Requiem for Cochrane's soul may say."
And, with the slaughter'd favourite's name,
Across the Monarch's brow there came
A cloud of ire, remorse, and shame.

XVI.

In answer nought could Angus speak ;
His proud heart swell'd wellnigh to break :
He turn'd aside, and down his cheek

A burning tear there stole.
His hand the Monarch sudden took,
That sight his kind heart could not brook :

" Now, by the Bruce's soul,
Angus, my hasty speech forgive!
For sure as doth his spirit live,
As he said of the Douglas old,

I well may say of you,—
That never king did subject hold,
In speech more free, in war more bold,
More tender and more true :

Forgive me, Douglas, once again."
And, while the King his hand did strain,
The old man's tears fell down like rain.
To seize the moment Marmion tried,
And whisper'd to the King aside :

"Oh! let such tears unwonted plead
 For respite short from dubious deed!
 A child will weep a bramble's smart,
 A maid to see her sparrow part,
 A stripling for a woman's heart:
 But woe awaits a country, when
 She sees the tears of bearded men.
 Then, oh! what omen, dark and high,
 When Douglas wets his manly eye!"

XVII.

Displeased was James, that stranger view'd
 And tamper'd with his changing mood.
 "Laugh those that can, weep those that may"
 Thus did the fiery Monarch say,
 "Southward I march by break of day;
 And if within Tantallon strong,
 The good Lord Marmion tarries long,
 Perchance our meeting next may fall
 At Tamworth, in his castle-hall."—
 The haughty Marmion felt the taunt,
 And answer'd, grave, the royal vaunt:
 "Much honour'd were my humble home,
 If in its halls King James should come;
 But Nottingham has archers good,
 And Yorkshire men are stern of mood;
 Northumbrian prickers wild and rude.
 On Derby hills the paths are steep;
 In Ouse and Tyne the fords are deep;
 And many a banner will be torn,
 And many a knight to earth be borne,
 And many a sheaf of arrows spent,
 Ere Scotland's King shall cross the Trent:
 Yet pause, brave Prince, while yet you may!"
 The Monarch lightly turn'd away,
 And to his nobles loud did call,—
 "Lords, to the dance,—a hall! a hall!"
 Himself his cloak and sword flung by,
 And led Dame Heron gallantly;
 And minstrels, at the royal order,
 Rung out—"Blue Bonnets o'er the Border."

XVIII.

Leave we these revels now, to tell
 What to Saint Hilda's maids befell,
 Whose galley, as they sail'd again
 To Whitby, by a Scot was ta'en.
 Now at Dun-Edin did they bide,
 Till James should of their fate decide;
 And soon, by his command,
 Were gently summon'd to prepare
 To journey under Marmion's care,
 As escort honour'd, safe, and fair,
 Again to English land.

* The ancient cry to make room for a dance, or pageant.

The Abbess told her chaplet o'er,
Nor knew which saint she should implore;
For, when she thought of Constance, sore
She fear'd Lord Marmion's mood.
And judge what Clara must have felt!
The sword, that hung in Marmion's belt,
Had drunk De Wilton's blood.
Unwittingly, King James had given,
As guard to Whitby's shades,
The man most dreaded under Heaven
By these defenceless maids:
Yet what petition could avail,
Or who would listen to the tale
Of woman, prisoner, and nun,
'Mid bustle of a war begun?
They deem'd it hopeless to avoid
The convoy of their dangerous guide.

XIX.

Their lodging, so the King assign'd,
To Marmion's, as their guardian, join'd;
And thus it fell, that, passing nigh,
The Palmer caught the Abbess' eye,
Who warn'd him by a scroll,
She had a secret to reveal,
That much concern'd the Church's weal,
And health of sinner's soul;
And, with deep charge of secrecy,
She named a place to meet,
Within an open balcony,
That hung from dizzy pitch, and high,
Above the stately street;
To which, as common to each home,
At night they might in secret come.

XX.

At night, in secret, there they came,
The Palmer and the holy Dame.
The moon among the clouds rose high,
And all the city hum was by.
Upon the street, where late before
Did din of war and warriors roar,
You might have heard a pebble fall,
A beetle hum, a cricket sing,
An owl flap his boding wing
On Giles's steeple tall.
The antique buildings, climbing high,
Whose Gothic frontlets sought the sky,
Were here wrapt deep in shade:
There on their brows the moonbeam broke,
Through the faint wreathes of silvery smoke,
And on the casements play'd.
And other light was none to see,
Save torches gliding far

Before some chieftain of degree,
 Who left the royal revelry
 To bowne him for the war.—
 A solemn scene the Abbess chose—
 A solemn hour, her secret to disclose.

XXI.

“O, holy Palmer!” she began,—
 “For sure he must be sainted man,
 Whose blessed feet have trod the ground
 Where the Redeemer’s tomb is found,—
 For his dear Church’s sake, my tale
 Attend, nor deem of light avail,
 Though I must speak of worldly love,—
 How vain to those who wed above!—
 De Wilton and Lord Marmion woo’d
 Clara de Clare, of Gloster’s blood;
 (Idle it were of Whitby’s dame,
 To say of that same blood I came;)
 And once, when jealous rage was high,
 Lord Marmion said despitously
 Wilton was traitor in his heart,
 And had made league with Martin Swart⁶³
 When he came here on Simnel’s part,
 And only cowardice did restrain
 His rebel aid on Stokefield’s plain,—
 And down he threw his glove:—the thing
 Was tried, as wont, before the King;
 Where frankly did De Wilton own,
 That Swart in Gueldres he had known;
 And that between them then there went
 Some scroll of courteous compliment.
 For this he to his castle sent;
 But when his messenger return’d,
 Judge how De Wilton’s fury burn’d!
 For in his packet there was laid
 Letters that claim’d disloyal aid,
 And proved King Henry’s cause betray’d.
 His fame, thus blighted, in the field
 He strove to clear, by spear and shield;—
 To clear his fame in vain he strove,
 For wondrous are His ways above!
 Perchance some form was unobserved;
 Perchance in prayer, or faith, he swerved
 Else how could guiltless champion quail,
 Or how the blessed ordeal fail?

XXII.

“His squire, who now De Wilton saw
 As recreant doom’d to suffer law,
 Repentant, own’d in vain.
 That, while he had the scrolls in care,
 A stranger maiden, passing fair,
 Had drench’d him with a beverage rare
 His words no faith could gain.

With Clare alone he credence won,
 Who, rather than wed Marmion,
 Did to Saint Hilda's shrine repair,
 To give our house her livings fair,
 And die a vestal vot'ress there.
 The impulse from the earth was given,
 But bent her to the paths of heaven.
 A purer heart, a lovelier maid,
 Ne'er shelter'd her in Whitby's shade.
 No, not since Saxon Edelfled;
 Only one trace of earthly strain,
 That for her lover's loss
 She cherishes a sorrow vain,
 And murmurs at the cross.—
 And then her heritage;—it goes
 Along the banks of Tame;
 Deep fields of grain the reaper mows,
 In meadows rich the heifer lows,
 The falconer and huntsman knows
 Its woodlands for the game.
 Shame were it to Saint Hilda dear
 And I, her humble vot'ress here,
 Should do a deadly sin,
 Her temple spoil'd before mine eyes.
 If this false Marmion such a prize
 By my consent should win;
 Yet hath our boisterous Monarch sworn
 That Clare shall from our house be torn;
 And grievous cause have I to fear,
 Such mandate doth Lord Marmion bear.

XXIII.

"Now, prisoner, helpless, and betray'd
 To evil power, I claim thine aid,
 By every step that thou hast trod
 To holy shrine and grotto dim,
 By every martyr's tortured limb,
 By angel, saint, and seraphim,
 And by the Church of God!
 For mark:—When Wilton was betray'd,
 And with his squire forged letters laid,
 She was, alas! that sinful maid
 By whom the deed was done,—
 O! shame and horror to be said!—
 She was a perjured nun!
 No clerk in all the land, like her,
 Traced quaint and varying character.
 Perchance you may a marvel deem,
 That Marmion's paramour
 (For such vile thing she was) should scheme
 Her lover's nuptial hour;
 But o'er him thus she hoped to gain,
 As privy to his honour's stain,
 Illimitable power :

For this she secretly retain'd
 Each proof that might the plot reveal,
 Instructions with his hand and seal;
 And thus Saint Hilda deign'd,
 Through sinners' perfidy impure,
 Her house's glory to secure,
 And Clare's immortal weal.

XXIV.

"T were long, and needless, here to tell,
 How to my hand these papers fell;
 With me they must not stay.
 Saint Hilda keep her Abbess true!
 Who knows what outrage he might do,
 While journeying by the way?—
 O, blessed Saint, if e'er again
 I venturous leave thy calm domain,
 To travel or by land or main,
 Deep penance may I pay!—
 Now, saintly Palmer, mark my prayer:
 I give this packet to thy care,
 For thee to stop they will not dare;
 And O, with cautious speed,
 To Wolsey's hand the papers bring,
 That he may show them to the King:
 And, for thy well-earn'd meed,
 Thou holy man, at Whitby's shrine
 A weekly mass shall still be thine,
 While priests can sing and read.—
 What ail'st thou?—Speak!"—For as he took
 The charge, a strong emotion shook
 His frame; and, ere reply,
 They heard a faint, yet shrilly tone,
 Like distant clarion feebly blown,
 That on the breeze did die;
 And loud the Abbess shriek'd in fear,
 "Saint Withold, save us!—What is here?
 Look at yon City Cross!
 See on its battled tower appear
 Phantoms, that scutcheons seem to rear,
 And blazon'd banners toss!"—

XXV.

Dun-Edin's Cross, a pillar'd stone,
 Rose on a turret octagon;
 (But now is razed that monument,
 Whence royal edict rang,
 And voice of Scotland's law was sent
 In glorious trumpet-clang.
 O! be his tomb as lead to lead,
 Upon its dull destroyer's head!—
 A minstrel's malison is said.)—
 Then on its battlements they saw
 A vision, passing Nature's law,
 Strange, wild, and dimly seen:

Figures that seem to rise and die,
 Gibber and sign, advance and fly,
 While nought confirm'd could ear or eye
 Discern of sound or mien.
 Yet darkly did it seem, as there
 Heralds and pursuivants prepare,
 With trumpet sound and blazon fair,
 A summons to proclaim :
 But indistinct the pageant proud,
 As fancy forms of midnight cloud,
 When flings the moon upon her shroud
 A wavering tinge of flame ;
 It flits, expands, and shifts, till loud,
 From midmost of the spectre crowd,
 This awful summons came :—⁶⁵

XXVI.

“Prince, prelate, potentate, and peer,
 Whose names I now shall call
 Scottish, or foreigner, give ear ;
 Subjects of him who sent me here,
 At his tribunal to appear,
 I summon one and all :
 I cite you by each deadly sin,
 That e'er hath soil'd your hearts within :
 I cite you by each brutal lust,
 That e'er defiled your earthly dust,—
 By wrath, by pride, by fear,
 By each o'er-mastering passion's tone,
 By the dark grave, and dying groan !
 When forty days are pass'd and gone,
 I cite you, at your Monarch's throne,
 To answer and appear.”
 Then thunder'd forth a roll of names :
 The first was thine, unhappy James !
 Then all thy nobles came ;
 Crawford, Glencairn, Montrose, Argyle,
 Ross, Bothwell, Forbes, Lennox, Lyle,—
 Why should I tell their separate style ?
 Each chief of birth and fame,
 Of Lowland, Highland, Border, Isle,
 Fore-doom'd to Flodden's carnage pile,
 Was cited there by name ;
 And Marmion, Lord of Fontenaye,
 Of Lutterward, and Scrivelbaye ;
 De Wilton, erst of Aberley,
 The self-same thundering voice did say.—
 But then another spoke :
 “Thy fatal summons I deny,
 And thine infernal Lord defy,
 Appealing me to Him on High,
 Who burst the sinner's yoke.”
 At that dread accent, with a scream,
 Parted the pageant like a dream,
 The summoner was gone.

Prone on her face the Abbess fell,
And fast, and fast, her beads did tell;
Her nuns came, startled by the yell,
And found her there alone.
She mark'd not, at the scene aghast,
What time, or how, the Palmer pass'd.

XXVII.

Shift we the scene.—The camp doth move

Dun-Edin's streets are empty now,
Save when, for weal of those they love,

To pray the prayer and vow the vow,
The tottering child, the anxious fair,
The grey-hair'd sire, with pious care,
To chapels and to shrines repair—
Where is the Palmer now? and where
The Abbess, Marmion, and Clare?—
Bold Douglas! to Tantallon fair

They journey in thy charge:
Lord Marmion rode on his right hand,
The Palmer still was with the band;
Angus, like Lindesay, did command,
That none should roam at large.
But in that Palmer's alter'd mien
A wondrous change might now be seen;

Freely he spoke of war,
Of marvels wrought by single hand,
When lifted for a native land:
And still look'd high, as if he plann'd
Some desperate deed afar.

His courser would he feed and stroke,
And, tucking up his sable frocke,
Would first his mettle bold provoke,

Then soothe or quell his pride.
Old Hubert said, that never one
He saw, except Lord Marmion,
A steed so fairly ride.

XXVIII.

Some half-hour's march behind, there came,
By Eustace govern'd fair,

A troop escorting Hilda's Dame,
With all her nuns, and Clare.

No audience had Lord Marmion sought;

Ever he fear'd to aggravate
Clara de Clare's suspicious hate;

And safer 'twas, he thought,
To wait till, from the nuns removed,

The influence of kinsmen loved,
And suit by Henry's self approved.

Her slow consent had wrought.

His was no flickering flame, that dies
Unless when fann'd by looks and sighs,
And lighted oft at lady's eyes;

He long'd to stretch his wide command
 O'er luckless Clara's ample land :
 Besides, when Wilton with him vied,
 Although the pang of humbled pride
 The place of jealousy supplied,
 Yet conquest, by that meanness won
 He almost loath'd to think upon,
 Led him, at times, to hate the cause
 Which made him burst through honour's laws.
 If e'er he lov'd, 't was her alone.
 Who died within that vault of stone.

XXIX.

And now, when close at hand they saw
 North Berwick's town, and lofty Law,
 Fitz-Eustace bade them pause a while,
 Before a venerable pile,
 Whose turrets view'd, afar,
 The lofty Bass, the Lambie Isle,
 The ocean's peace or war.
 At tolling of a bell, forth came
 The convent's venerable Dame,
 And pray'd Saint Hilda's Abbess rest
 With her, a loved and honour'd guest,
 Till Douglas should a bark prepare
 To waft her back to Whitby fair.
 Glad was the Abbess, you may guess,
 And thank'd the Scottish Prioress ;
 And tedious were to tell, I ween,
 The courteous speech that pass'd between.
 O'erjoy'd the nuns their palfreys leave ;
 But when fair Clara did intend,
 Like them, from horseback to descend,
 Fitz-Eustace said,—“ I grieve,
 Fair lady, grieve e'en from my heart,
 Such gentle company to part ;—
 Think not discourtesy,
 But lords' commands must be obeyed ;
 And Marmion and the Douglas said,
 That you must wend with me.
 Lord Marmion hath a letter broad,
 Which to the Scottish Earl he show'd,
 Commanding that, beneath his care,
 Without delay, you shall repair
 To your young kinsman, Lord Fitz-Clare.”

XXX.

The startled Abbess loud exclaim'd ;
 But she, at whom the blow was aim'd,
 Grew pale as death, and cold as lead,—
 She deem'd she heard her death-doom read.
 “ Cheer thee, my child !” the Abbess said,
 “ They dare not tear thee from my hand,
 To ride alone with armed band.”—
 “ Nay, holy mother nay,”

Fitz-Eustace said, "the lovely Clare
 Will be in Lady Angus' care,
 In Scotland while we stay;
 And, when we move, an easy ride
 Will bring us to the English side,
 Female attendance to provide
 Befitting Gloster's heir:
 Nor thinks nor dreams my noble lord,
 By slightest look, or act, or word,
 To harass Lady Clare;
 Her faithful guardian he will be,
 Nor sue for slightest courtesy
 That e'en to stranger falls,
 Till he shall place her, safe and free,
 Within her kinsman's halls."
 He spoke, and blush'd with earnest grace
 His faith was painted on his face,
 And Clare's worst fear relieved.
 The Lady Abbess loud exclaim'd
 On Henry, and the Douglas blamed,
 Entreated, threaten'd, grieved;
 To martyr, saint, and prophet pray'd,
 Against Lord Marmion inveigh'd,
 And call'd the Prioress to aid,
 To curse with candle, bell, and book.
 Her head the grave Cistercian shook:
 "The Douglas, and the King," she said,
 "In their commands will be obey'd;
 Grieve not, nor dream that harm can fall
 The maiden in Tantallon hall."

XXXI.

The Abbess, seeing strife was vain,
 Assumed her wonted state again,—
 For much of state she had,—
 Composed her veil, and raised her head,
 And—"Bid," in solemn voice she said,
 "Thy master, bold and bad,
 The records of his house turn o'er,
 And, when he shall there written see,
 That one of his own ancestry
 Drove the Monks forth of Coventry,"⁶³
 Bid him his fate explore!
 Francing in pride of earthly trust,
 His charger hurl'd him to the dust,
 And, by a base plebeian thrust,
 He died his band before.
 God judge 'twixt Marmion and me:
 He is a Chief of high degree,
 And I a poor recluse:
 Yet oft, in holy writ, we see
 Even such weak minister as me
 May the oppressor bruise:
 For thus, inspired, did Jewish slay
 The mighty in his sin,

And Jael thus, and Deborah "—
 Here hasty Blount broke in :
 "Fitz-Eustace, we must march our band :
 St Anton' fire thee ! wilt thou stand
 All day, with bonnet in thy hand,
 To hear the Lady preach ?
 By this good light ! if thus we stay,
 Lord Marmion, for our fond delay,
 Will sharper sermon teach.
 Come, don thy cap, and mount thy horse ;
 The Dame must patience take perforce."—

XXXII.

"Submit we then to force," said Clare,
 "But let this barbarous lord despair
 His purposed aim to win ;
 Let him take living, land, and life ;
 But to be Marmion's wedded wife
 In me were deadly sin :
 And if it be the King's decree,
 That I must find no sanctuary,
 In that inviolable dome,
 Where even a homicide might come,
 And safely rest his head,
 Though at its open portals stood,
 Thirsting to pour forth blood for blood,
 The kinsmen of the dead :
 Yet one asylum is my own
 Against the dreaded hour ;
 A low, a silent, and a lone,
 Where kings have little power.
 One victim is before me there.—
 Mother, your blessing ; and in prayer
 Remember your unhappy Clare !"
 Loud weeps the Abbess, and bestows
 Kind blessings many a one :
 Weeping and wailing loud arose,
 Round patient Clare, the clamorous woes
 Of every simple nun.
 His eyes the gentle Eustace dried,
 And scarce rude Blount the sight could bide.
 Then took the squire her rein,
 And gently led away her steed,
 And, by each courteous word and deed,
 To cheer her strove in vain.

XXXIII.

But scant three miles the band had rode,
 When o'er a height they pass'd,
 And, sudden, close before them show'd
 His towers, Tantallon vast ;
 Broad, massive, high, and stretching far,
 And held impregnable in war,
 On a projecting rock they rose,
 And round three sides the ocean flows,

The fourth did battled walls enclose,
 And double mound and fosse.
 By narrow drawbridge, outworks strong,
 Through studded gates, an entrance long,
 To the main court they cross.
 It was a wide and stately square :
 Around were lodgings, fit and fair,
 And towers of various form,
 Which on the court projected far,
 And broke its lines quadrangular.
 Here was square keep, there turret high,
 Or pinnacle that sought the sky,
 Whence oft the Warder could descry
 The gathering ocean-storm.

XXXIV.

Here did they rest.—The princely care
 Of Douglas, why should I declare,
 Or say they met reception fair?
 Or why the tidings say,
 Which varying, to Tantallon came,
 By hurrying posts or fleetier fame,
 With every varying day?
 And, first, they heard King James had won
 Etall, and Wark, and Ford; and then,
 That Norham Castle strong was ta'en.
 At that sore marvell'd Marmion;—
 And Douglas hoped his Monarch's hand
 Would soon subdue Northumberland :
 But whisper'd news there came,
 That, while his host inactive lay,
 And melted by degrees away,
 King James was dallying off the day
 With Heron's wily dame.—
 Such acts to chronicles I yield;
 Go seek them there and see :
 Mine is a tale of Flodden Field,
 And not a history.—
 At length they heard the Scottish host
 On that high ridge had made their post,
 Which frowns o'er Milfield Plain;
 And that brave Surrey many a band
 Had gather'd in the Southern land,
 And march'd into Northumberland,
 And camp at Wooler ta'en.
 Marmion, like charger in the stall,
 That hears, without, the trumpet-call
 Began to chafe, and swear :—
 " A sorry thing to hide my head
 In castle, like a fearful maid,
 When such a field is near!
 Needs must I see this battle-day :
 Death to my fame if such a fray
 Were fought, and Marmion away!

The Douglas, too, I wot not why,
 Hath 'bated of his courtesy :
 No longer in his halls I'll stay."
 Then bade his band they should array
 For march against the dawning day.

Introduction to Canto Sixth.

TO RICHARD HEBER, Esq.

Mertoun-House, Christmas.

HEAP on more wood !—the wind is chill ;
 But let it whistle as it will,
 We'll keep our Christmas merry still.
 Each age has deem'd the new-born year
 The fittest time for festal cheer :
 Even, heathen yet, the savage Dane
 At Iol more deep the mead did drain ;⁶⁷
 High on the beach his galleys drew,
 And feasted all his pirate crew ;
 Then in his low and pine-built hall,
 Where shields and axes deck'd the wall ;
 They gorged upon the half-dress'd steer ;
 Caroused in seas of sable beer ;
 While round, in brutal jest, were thrown
 The half-gnaw'd rib, and marrow-bone :
 Or listen'd all, in grim delight,
 While Scalds yell'd out the joys of fight.
 Then forth, in frenzy, would they hie,
 While wildly-loose their red locks fly,
 And dancing round the blazing pile,
 They make such barbarous mirth the while,
 As best might to the mind recall
 The boisterous joys of Odin's hall.
 And well our Christian sires of old
 Loved when the year its course had roll'd,
 And brought blithe Christmas back again,
 With all his hospitable train.
 Domestic and religious rite
 Gave honour to the holy night ;
 On Christmas eve the bells were rung ;
 On Christmas eve the mass was sung :
 That only night in all the year,
 Saw the stoled priest the chalice rear.⁶⁸
 The damsel donn'd her kirtle sheen ;
 The hall was dress'd with holly green ;
 Forth to the wood did merry men go,
 To gather in the misletoe.

Then open'd wide the Baron's hall
 To vassal, tenant, serf, and all;
 Power laid his rod of rule aside,
 And Ceremony doff'd his pride.
 The heir, with roses in his shoes,
 That night might village partner choose;
 The Lord, underogating, share
 The vulgar game of "post and pair."
 All hail'd, with uncontroll'd delight,
 And general voice, the happy night,
 That to the cottage, as the crown,
 Brought tidings of salvation down.

The fire, with well-dried logs supplied,
 Went roaring up the chimney wide;
 The huge hall-table's oaken face,
 Scrubb'd till it shone, the day to grace,
 Bore then upon its massive board
 No mark to part the squire and lord.
 Then was brought in the lusty brawn,
 By old blue-coated serving-man;
 Then the grim boar's head frown'd on high,
 Crested with bays and rosemary.
 Well can the green-garb'd ranger tell,
 How, when, and where, the monster fell;
 What dogs before his death he tore,
 And all the baiting of the boar.
 The wassel round, in good brown bowls,
 Garnish'd with ribbons, blithely trowls,
 There the huge sirloin reek'd; hard by
 Plum-porridge stood, and Christmas pie;
 Nor fail'd old Scotland to produce,
 At such high tide, her savoury goose.
 Then came the merry maskers in,
 And carols roar'd with blithesome din;
 If unmelodious was the song,
 It was a hearty note, and strong.
 Who lists may in their mumming see
 Traces of ancient mystery;⁶⁹
 White shirts supplied the masquerade,
 And smutt'd cheeks the visors made;
 But, O! what maskers, richly dight,
 Can boast of bosoms half so light!
 England was merry England, when
 Old Christmas brought his sports again.
 'Twas Christmas broach'd the mightiest ale;
 'Twas Christmas told the merriest tale;
 A Christmas gambol oft could cheer
 The poor man's heart through half the year.

Still linger, in our northern clime,
 Some remnants of the good old time;
 And still, within our valleys here,
 We hold the kindred title dear,

Even when, perchance, its far-fetch'd claim,
 To Southern ear sounds empty name;
 For course of blood, our proverbs deem,
 Is warmer than the mountain-stream.
 And thus, my Christmas still I hold,
 Where my great-grandsire came of old,
 With amber beard, and flaxen hair,
 And reverend apostolic air—
 The feast and holy-tide to share,
 And mix sobriety with wine,
 And honest mirth with thoughts divine:
 Small thought was his, in after time
 E'er to be hitch'd into a rhyme.
 The simple sire could only boast,
 That he was loyal to his cost;
 The banish'd race of kings revered,
 And lost his land,—but kept his beard.

In these dear halls, where welcome kind
 Is with fair liberty combined;
 Where cordial friendship gives the hand,
 And flies constraint the magic wand
 Of the fair dame that rules the land.
 Little we heed the tempest drear,
 While music, mirth, and social cheer,
 Speed on their wings the passing year.
 And Mertoun's halls are fair e'en now,
 When not a leaf is on the bough.
 Tweed loves them well, and turns again,
 As loath to leave the sweet domain,
 And holds his mirror to her face,
 And clips her with a close embrace:—
 Gladly as he, we seek the dome,
 And as reluctant turn us home.

How just, that, at this time of glee,
 My thoughts should, Heber, turn to thee!
 For many a merry hour we've known,
 And heard the chimes of midnight's tone.
 Cease, then, my friend! a moment cease,
 And leave these classic tomes in peace!
 Of Roman and of Grecian lore,
 Sure mortal brain can hold no more.
 These ancients, as Noll Bluff might say,
 "Were pretty fellows in their day;"
 But time and tide o'er all prevail—
 On Christmas eve a Christmas tale—
 Of wonder and of war—"Profane!
 What! leave the lofty Latian strain,
 Her stately prose, her verse's charms,
 To hear the clash of rusty arms:
 in Fairy Land or Limbo lost,
 To jostle conjurer and ghost,
 Goblin and witch!"—Nay, Heber dear,
 Before you touch my charter, hear.

Though Leyden aids, alas ! no more,
 My cause with many-languaged lore,
 This may I say :—in realms of death
 Ulysses meets Alcides' *wraith* ;
 Æneas, upon Thracia's shore,
 The ghost of murder'd Polydore ;
 For omens, we in Livy cross,
 At every turn, *locutus Bos*.
 As grave and duly speaks that ox,
 As if he told the price of stocks ;
 Or held, in Rome republican,
 The place of Common-councilman.

All nations have their omens drear,
 Their legends wild of woe and fear.
 To Cambria look—the peasant see,
 Bethink him of Glendowerdy,
 And shun "the spirit's Blasted Tree."
 Highlander, whose red claymore
 The battle turn'd on Maida's shore,
 Will, on a Friday morn, look pale,
 If ask'd to tell a fairy tale :⁷⁰
 He fears the vengeful Elfin King,
 Who leaves that day his grassy ring :
 Invisible to human ken,
 He walks among the sons of men.

Didst e'er, dear Heber, pass along
 Beneath the towers of Franchémont,
 Which, like an eagle's nest in air,
 Hang o'er the stream and hamlet fair ?
 Deep in their vaults, the peasants say,
 A mighty treasure buried lay,
 Amass'd through rapine and through wrong
 By the last Lord of Franchémont.⁷¹
 The iron chest is bolted hard ;
 A huntsman sits, its constant guard ;
 Around his neck his horn is hung,
 His hanger in his belt is slung ;
 Before his feet his blood-hounds lie :
 An 'twere not for his gloomy eye,
 Whose withering glance no heart can brook,
 As true a huntsman doth he look,
 As bugle e'er in brake did sound,
 Or ever halloo'd to a hound.
 To chase the fiend, and win the prize,
 In that same dungeon ever tries
 An aged necromantic priest ;
 It is an hundred years at least,
 Since 'twixt them first the strife begun,
 And neither yet has lost nor won.
 And oft the Conjuror's words will make
 The stubborn Demon groan and quake ;
 And oft the bands of iron break,

Or bursts one lock, that still amain,
Fast as 'tis open'd, shuts again.
That magic strife within the tomb
May last until the day of doom,
Unless the adept shall learn to tell
The very word that clench'd the spell,
When Franch'mont lock'd the treasure cell.
An hundred years are pass'd and gone,
And scarce three letters has he won.

Such general superstition may
Excuse for old Pitscottie say;
Whose gossip history has given
My song the messenger from Heaven,^a
That warn'd, in Lithgow, Scotland's King,
Nor less the infernal summoning;
May pass the Monk of Durham's tale,
Whose demon fought in Gothic mail;
May pardon plead for Fordun grave,
Who told of Gifford's Goblin-Cave.
But why such instances to you
Who, in an instant, can renew
Your treasured hoards of various lore,
And furnish twenty thousand more?
Hoard, not like theirs whose volumes rest
Like treasures in the Franch'mont chest,
While gripple owners still refuse
To others what they cannot use;
Give them the priest's whole century,
They shall not spell you letters three;
Their pleasure in the books the same
The magpie takes in pilfer'd gem.
Thy volumes, open as thy heart,
Delight, amusement, science, art,
To every ear and eye impart;
Yet who of all who thus employ them,
Can like the owner's self enjoy them?—
But, hark! I hear the distant drum
The day of Flodden Field is come.—
Adieu, dear Heber! life and health,
And store of literary wealth!

^a See Note 46.

CANTO SIXTH.

The Battle.

I.

WHILE great events were on the gale,
And each hour brought a varying tale,
And the demeanour, changed and cold,
Of Douglas, fretted Marmion bold,
And, like the impatient steed of war,
He snuff'd the battle from afar;
And hopes were none, that back again
Herald should come from Terouenne,
Where England's King in leaguer lay,
Before decisive battle-day;
Whilst these things were, the mournful Clare
Did in the Dame's devotions share:
For the good Countess ceaseless pray'd
To Heaven and Saints, her sons to aid,
And, with short interval, did pass
From prayer to book, from book to mass,
And all in high Baronial pride,—
A life both dull and dignified;—
Yet as Lord Marmion nothing press'd
Upon her intervals of rest,
Dejected Clara well could bear
The formal state, the lengthen'd prayer,
Though dearest to her wounded heart
The hours that she might spend apart.

II.

I said, Tantallon's dizzy steep
Hung o'er the margin of the deep.
Many a rude tower and rampart there
Repell'd the insult of the air,
Which, when the tempest vex'd the sky,
Half breeze, half spray, came whistling by.
Above the rest, a turret square
Did o'er its Gothic entrance bear,
Of sculpture rude, a stony shield;
The Bloody Heart was in the Field,
And in the chief three mullets stood,
The cognizance of Douglas blood.
The turret held a narrow stair,
Which, mounted, gave you access where
A parapet's embattled row
Did seaward round the castle go.

Sometimes in dizzy steps descending,
Sometimes in narrow circuit bending,
Sometimes in platform broad extending,
Its varying circle did combine
Bulwark, and bartizan, and line,
And bastion, tower, and vantage-coign :
Above the booming ocean leant
The far projecting battlement ;
The billows burst, in ceaseless flow,
Upon the precipice below.
Where'er Tantallon faced the land,
Gate-works, and walls, were strongly mann'd ;
No need upon the sea-girt side—
The steepy rock, and frantic tide,
Approach of human step denied ;
And thus these lines, and ramparts rude,
Were left in deepest solitude.

III.

And, for they were so lonely, Clare
Would to these battlements repair,
And muse upon her sorrows there,
And list the sea-bird's cry ;
Or slow, like noontide ghost, would glide
Along the dark-grey bulwarks' side
And ever on the heaving tide
Look down with weary eye.
Oft did the cliff, and swelling main,
Recall the thoughts of Whitby's fane,—
A home she ne'er might see again ;
For she had laid adown,
So Douglas bade, the hood and veil,
And frontlet of the cloister pale,
And Benedictine gown :
It were unseemly sight, he said,
A novice out of convent shade.—
Now her bright locks, with sunny glow,
Again adorn'd her brow of snow ;
Her mantle rich, whose borders, round,
A deep and fretted broidery bound,
In golden foldings sought the ground ;
Of holy ornament, alone
Remain'd a cross with ruby stone ;
And often did she look
On that which in her hand she bore,
With velvet bound, and broider'd o'er,
Her breviary book.
In such a place, so lone, so grim,
At dawning pale, or twilight dim,
It fearful would have been
To meet a form so richly dress'd,
With book in hand, and cross on breast,
And such a woeful mien.
Fitz-Eustace, loitering with his bow,
To practise on the gull and crow.

Saw her, at distance, gliding slow,
 And did by Mary swear,—
 Some love-lorn Fay she might have been,
 Or, in Romance, some spell-bound Queen;
 For ne'er, in work-day world, was seen
 A form so witching fair.

IV.

Once walking thus, at evening tide,
 It chanced a gliding sail she spied,
 And, sighing, thought—"The Abbess, there,
 Perchance, does to her home repair;
 Her peaceful rule, where Duty, free,
 Walks hand in hand with Charity;
 Where oft Devotion's tranced glow
 Can such a glimpse of heaven bestow,
 That the enraptured sisters see
 High vision and deep mystery;
 The very form of Hilda fair,
 Hovering upon the sunny air,
 And smiling on her votaries' prayer.
 O! wherefore, to my duller eye,
 Did still the Saint her form deny?
 Was it, that, sear'd by sinful scorn
 My heart could neither melt nor burn?
 Or lie my warm affections low,
 With him that taught them first to glow?
 Yet, gentle Abbess, well I knew,
 To pay thy kindness grateful due,
 And well could brook the mild command,
 That ruled thy simple maiden band.
 How different now! condemn'd to bide
 My doom from this dark tyrant's pride.—
 But Marmion has to learn, ere long,
 That constant mind, and hate of wrong,
 Descended to a feeble girl,
 From Red De Clare, stout Gloster's Earl:
 Of such a stem, a sapling weak,
 He ne'er shall bend, although he break.

V.

"But see!—what makes this armour here?"—
 For in her path there lay
 Targe, corslet, helm;—she view'd them near.—
 "The breast-plate pierced!—Ay, much I fear,
 Weak fence wert thou 'gainst foeman's spear,
 That hath made fatal entrance here,
 As these dark blood-gouts say.—
 Thus Wilton! Oh! not corslet's ward,
 Not truth, as diamond pure and hard,
 Could be thy manly bosom's guard,
 On yon disastrous day!"—
 She raised her eyes in mournful mood,—
 WILTON himself before her stood!

It might have seem'd his passing ghost,
 For every youthful grace was lost;
 And joy unwonted, and surprise,
 Gave their strange wildness to his eyes. --
 Expect not, noble dames and lords,
 That I can tell such scene in words:
 What skilful limner e'er would choose
 To paint the rainbow's varying hues,
 Unless to mortal it were given
 To dip his brush in dyes of heaven?
 Far less can my weak line declare
 Each changing passion's shade;
 Brightening to rapture from despair,
 Sorrow, surprise, and pity there,
 And joy, with her angelic air,
 And hope, that paints the future fair,
 Their varying hues display'd:
 Each o'er its rival's ground extending,
 Alternate conquering, shifting, blending,
 Till all, fatigued, the conflict yield,
 And mighty Love retains the field.
 Shortly I tell what then he said,
 By many a tender word delay'd,
 And modest blush, and bursting sigh,
 And question kind, and fond reply:—

VI.

De Wilton's History.

"Forget we that disastrous day,
 When senseless in the lists I lay.
 Thence dragg'd,—but how I cannot know,
 For sense and recollection fled,—
 I found me on a pallet low,
 Within my ancient beadsman's shed.
 Austin,—Remember'st thou, my Clare,
 How thou did'st blush, when the old man,
 When first our infant love began,
 Said we would make a matchless pair?—
 Menials, and friends, and kinsmen fled
 From the degraded traitor's bed,—
 He only held my burning head,
 And tended me for many a day,
 While wounds and fever held their sway.
 But far more needful was his care,
 When sense return'd to wake despair;
 For I did tear the closing wound,
 And dash me frantic on the ground,
 If e'er I heard the name of Clare.
 At length, to calmer reason brought,
 Much by his kind attendance wrought
 With him I left my native strand,
 And, in a Palmer's weeds array'd,
 My hated name and form to shade,
 I journey'd many a land;

No more a lord of rank and birth,
 But mingled with the dregs of earth.
 Oft Austin for my reason fear'd,
 When I would sit, and deeply brood
 On dark revenge, and deeds of blood,
 Or wild mad schemes uprear'd.
 My friend at length fell sick, and said,
 God would remove him soon :
 And, while upon his dying bed,
 He begg'd of me a boon—
 If e'er my deadliest enemy
 Beneath my brand should conquer'd lie
 Even then my mercy should awake,
 And spare his life for Austin's sake.

VII.

" Still restless as a second Cain,
 To Scotland next my route was ta'en,
 Full well the paths I knew.
 Fame of my fate made various sound,
 That death in pilgrimage I found,
 That I had perish'd of my wound,—
 None cared which tale was true :
 And living eye could never guess
 De Wilton in his Palmer's dress ;
 For now that sable slough is shed,
 And trimm'd my shaggy beard and head,
 I scarcely know me in the glass.
 A chance most wondrous did provide,
 That I should be that Baron's guide—
 I will not name his name!—
 Vengeance to God alone belongs ;
 But, when I think on all my wrongs,
 My blood is liquid flame!
 And ne'er the time shall I forget,
 When, in a Scottish hostel set,
 Dark looks we did exchange :
 What were his thoughts I cannot tell ;
 But in my bosom muster'd Hell
 Its plans of dark revenge.

VIII.

A word of vulgar angury,
 That broke from me, I scarce knew why,
 Brought on a village tale ;
 Which wrought upon his moody sprite,
 And sent him armed forth by night.
 I borrow'd steed and mail,
 And weapons, from his sleeping band ;
 And, passing from a postern door,
 We met, and counter'd hand to hand,—
 He fell on Gifford moor.
 For the death-stroke my brand I drew
 (O then my helmed head he knew
 The Palmer's cowl was gone,)

Then had three inches of my blade
The heavy debt of vengeance paid,—
My hand the thought of Austin staid,
I left him there alone.—
O good old man ! even from the grave
Thy spirit could thy master save :
If I had slain my foeman, ne'er
Had Whitby's Abbess, in her fear,
Given to my hand this packet dear,
Of power to clear my injured fame,
And vindicate De Wilton's name.—
Perchance you heard the Abbess tell
Of the strange pageantry of Hell,
That broke our secret speech—
It rose from the infernal shade,
Or fealtly was some juggle play'd,
A tale of peace to teach.
Appeal to heaven I judged was best,
When my name came among the rest.

IX.

" Now here, within Tantallon Hold,
To Douglas late my tale I told,
To whom my house was known of old.
Won by my proofs, his falchion bright
This eve anew shall dub me knight.
These were the arms that once did turn
The tide of fight on Otterburne,
And Harry Hotspur forced to yield,
When the Dead Douglas won the field.
These Angus gave—his armourer's care,
Ere morn, shall every breach repair ;
For nought, he said, was in his halls,
But ancient armour on the walls,
And aged chargers in the stalls,
And women, priests, and grey-hair'd men ;
The rest were all in Twisel glen.
And now I watch my armour here,
By law of arms, till midnight's near ;
Then, once again a belted knight,
Seek Surrey's camp with dawn of light.

X.

" There soon again we meet, my Clare !
This Baron means to guide thee there :
Douglas reveres his King's command,
Else would he take thee from his band.
And there thy kinsman, Surrey, too,
Will give De Wilton justice due.
Now meeter far for martial broil,
Firmer my limbs, and strung by toil,
Once more"—" O Wilton ! must we then
Risk new-found happiness again,
Trust fate of arms once more ?

And is there not an humble glen,
 Where we, content and poor,
 Might build a cottage in the shade,
 A shepherd thou, and I to aid
 Thy task on dale and moor?—
 That reddening brow!—too well I know
 Not even thy Clare can peace bestow,
 While falsehood stains thy name:
 Go then to fight! Clare bids thee go!
 Clare can a warrior's feelings know,
 And weep a warrior's shame;
 Can Red Earl Gilbert's spirit feel,
 Buckle the spurs upon thy heel,
 And belt thee with thy brand of steel,
 And send thee forth to fame!"

XI.

That night, upon the rocks and bay,
 The midnight moonbeam slumbering lay,
 And pour'd its silver light, and pure,
 Through loop-hole, and through embrasure
 Upon Tantallon tower and hall;
 But chief where arched windows wide
 Illuminate the chapel's pride,
 The sober glances fall.
 Much was their need; though seam'd with scars,
 Two veterans of the Douglas' wars,
 Though two grey priests were there,
 And each a blazing torch held high,
 You could not by their blaze descry
 The chapel's carving fair.
 Amid that dim and smoky light,
 Chequering the silver moonshine bright,
 A bishop by the altar stood,
 A noble lord of Douglas blood,
 With mitre sheen, and roquet white.
 Yet showed his meek and thoughtful eye
 But little pride of prelacy;
 More pleased that, in a barbarous age,
 He gave rude Scotland Virgil's page,
 Than that beneath his rule he held
 The bishopric of fair Dunkeld.
 Beside him ancient Angus stood,
 Doff'd his furr'd gown, and sable hood:
 O'er his huge form and visage pale,
 He wore a cap and shirt of mail;
 And lean'd his large and wrinkled hand
 Upon the huge and sweeping brand
 Which wont of yore, in battle fray,
 His foeman's limbs to shred away,
 As wood-knife lops the sapling spray.⁷²
 He seem'd as, from the tombs around
 Rising at judgment-day,
 Some giant Douglas may be found
 In all his old array;

So pale his face, so huge his limb,
So old his arms, his look so grim.

XII.

Then at the altar Wilton kneels,
And Clare the spurs bound on his heels;
And think what next he must have felt,
At buckling of the falchion belt!

And judge how Clara changed her hue,
While fastening to her lover's side
A friend, which, though in danger tried,
He once had found untrue!

Then Douglas struck him with his blade:
"Saint Michael and Saint Andrew aid,
I dub thee knight.

Arise, Sir Ralph, De Wilton's heir!
For King, for Church, for Lady fair,
See that thou fight."

And Bishop Gawain, as he rose,
Said—"Wilton! grieve not for thy woes,
Disgrace, and trouble;
For He, who honour best bestows,
May give thee double."

De Wilton sobb'd, for sob he must—
"Where'er I meet a Douglas, trust
That Douglas is my brother!"

"Nay, nay," old Angus said, "not so;
To Surrey's camp thou now must go,
Thy wrongs no longer smother.
I have two sons in yonder field;
And, if thou meet'st them under shield,
Upon them bravely—do thy worst;
And foul fall him that blanches first!"

XIII.

Not far advanced was morning day,
When Marmion did his troop array
To Surrey's camp to ride;
He had safe-conduct for his band,
Beneath the royal seal and hand,

And Douglas gave a guide:
The ancient Earl, with stately grace,
Would Clara on her palfrey place,
And whisper'd in an under tone,
"Let the hawk stoop, his prey is flown."—
The train from out the castle drew.
But Marmion stopp'd to bid adieu:—
"Though something I might plain," he said,
"Of cold respect to stranger guest,
Sent hither by your King's behest,
While in Tantallon's towers I staid;
Part we in friendship from your land,
And, noble Earl, receive my hand."—
But Douglas round him drew his cloak,
Folded his arms, and thus he spoke:

"My manors, halls, and bowers, shall still
 Be open, at my Sovereign's will,
 To each one whom he lists, howe'er
 Unmeet to be the owner's peer.
 My castles are my King's alone,
 From turret to foundation-stone—
 The hand of Douglas is his own;
 And never shall in friendly grasp
 The hand of such as Marmion clasp."—

XIV.

Burn'd Marmion's swarthy cheek like fire,
 And shook his very frame for ire,
 And—"This to me!" he said—
 "An 't were not for thy hoary beard,
 Such hand as Marmion's had not spared
 To cleave the Douglas' head!
 And, first, I tell thee, haughty Peer,
 He, who does England's message here,
 Although the meanest in her state,
 May well, proud Angus, be thy mate:
 And, Douglas, more I tell thee here,
 Even in thy pitch of pride,
 Here in thy hold, thy vassals near,
 (Nay, never look upon your lord,
 And lay your hands upon your sword,)
 I tell thee, thou'rt defied!
 And if thou saidst I am not peer
 To any lord in Scotland here,
 Lowland or Highland, far or near,
 Lord Angus, thou hast lied!"—
 On the Earl's cheek the flush of rage
 O'ercame the ashen hue of age:
 Fierce he broke forth—"And darest thou then
 To beard the lion in his den,
 The Douglas in his hall?
 And hopest thou hence unscathed to go?—
 No, by Saint Bride of Bothwell, no!
 Up drawbridge, grooms!—what, Warder, ho!
 Let the portcullis fall."⁷³
 Lord Marmion turn'd,—well was his need,
 And dash'd the rowels in his steed,
 Like arrow through the archway sprung,
 The ponderous grate behind him rung:
 To pass there was such scanty room,
 The bars, descending, razed his plume

XV.

The steed along the drawbridge flies,
 Just as it trembled on the rise;
 Nor lighter does the swallow skim
 Along the smooth lake's level brim:
 And when Lord Marmion reach'd his band,
 He halts, and turns with clenched hand,

And shout of loud defiance pours,
And shook his gauntlet at the towers.
"Horse! horse!" the Douglas cried, "and chase!"
But soon he rein'd his fury's pace:
"A royal messenger he came,
Though most unworthy of the name.—
A letter forged! Saint Jude to speed!
Did ever knight so foul a deed!"⁷⁴
At first in heart it liked me ill,
When the King praised his clerkly skill.
Thanks to Saint Bothan, son of mine,
Save Gawain, ne'er could pen a line:
So swore I, and I swear it still,
Let my boy-bishop fret his fill.—
Saint Mary mend my fiery mood!
Old age ne'er cools the Douglas blood,
I thought to slay him where he stood.
'Tis pity of him too," he cried:
"Beld can he speak, and fairly ride;
I warrant him a warrior tried."
With this his mandate he recalls,
And slowly seeks his castle halls.

XVI.

The day in Marmion's journey wore;
Yet, ere his passion's gust was o'er,
They cross'd the heights of Stanrig-moor.
His troop more closely there he scann'd,
And miss'd the Palmer from the band.—
"Palmer or not," young Blount did say,
"He parted at the peep of day;
Good sooth, it was in strange array."—
"In what array?" said Marmion, quick.
"My Lord, I ill can spell the trick;
But all night long, with clink and bang,
Close to my couch did hammers clang;
At dawn the falling drawbridge rang,
And from a loop-hole while I peep,
Old Bell-the-Cat came from the Keep,
Wrapp'd in a gown of sables fair,
As fearful of the morning air;
Beneath, when that was blown aside,
A rusty shirt of mail I spied,
By Archibald won in bloody work,
Against the Saracen and Turk:
Last night it hung not in the hall;
I thought some marvel would befall.
And next I saw them saddled lead
Old Cheviot forth, the Earl's best steed;
A matchless horse, though something old,
Prompt in his paces, cool and bold.
I heard the Sheriff Sholto say,
The Earl did much the Master pray
To use him on the battle-day

But he preferr'd—"Nay, Henry, cease!
 Thou sworn horse-courser, hold thy peace.—
 Eustace, thou bear'st a brain—I pray
 What did Blount see at break of day?"—

XVII.

"In brief, my lord, we both descried
 (For then I stood by Henry's side)
 The Palmer mount, and cutwards ride,
 Upon the Earl's own favourite steed:
 All sheathed he was in armour bright,
 And much resembled that same knight,
 Subdued by you in Cotswold fight:
 Lord Angus wish'd him speed."—
 The instant that Fitz-Eustace spoke,
 A sudden light on Marmion broke;—
 "Ah! dastard fool, to reason lost!"
 He mutter'd; "T was nor fay nor ghost
 I met upon the moonlight wold,
 But living man of earthly mould.—
 O dotage blind and gross!
 Had I but fought as wont, one thrust
 Had laid De Wilton in the dust,
 My path no more to cross.—
 How stand we now?—he told his tale
 To Douglas; and with some avail;
 'T was therefore gloom'd his rugged brow.—
 Will Surrey dare to entertain,
 'Gainst Marmion, charge disproved and vain?
 Small risk of that, I trow,
 Yet Clare's sharp questions must I shun;
 Must separate Constance from the Nun—
 O, what a tangled web we weave,
 When first we practise to deceive!
 A Palmer too!—no wonder why
 I felt rebuked beneath his eye:
 I might have known there was but one,
 Whose look could quell Lord Marmion."

XVIII.

Stung with these thoughts, he urged to speed
 His troop, and reach'd, at eve, the Tweed,
 Where Lennel's convent closed their march;
 (There now is left but one frail arch,
 Yet mourn thou not its cells;
 Our time a fair exchange has made;
 Hard by, in hospitable shade,
 A reverend pilgrim dwells,
 Well worth the whole Bernardine brood,
 That e'er wore sandal, frock, or hood.)
 Yet did Saint Bernard's Abbot there
 Give Marmion entertainment fair,
 And lodging for his train and Clare.
 Next morn the Baron climb'd the tower,
 To view afar the Scottish power,

Encamp'd on Flodden edge:
The white pavilions made a show,
Like remnants of the winter snow,
Along the dusky ridge.
Lord Marmion look'd:—at length his eye
Unusual movement might descry
Amid the shifting lines:
The Scottish host drawn out appears,
For, flashing on the hedge of spears,
The eastern sunbeam shines.
Their front now deepening, now extending;
Their flank inclining, wheeling, bending,
Now drawing back, and now descending,
The skilful Marmion well could know,
They watch'd the motions of some foe,
Who traversed on the plain below.

XIX.

Even so it was. From Flodden ridge
The Scots beheld the English host
Leave Barmore-wood, their evening post,
And heedful watch'd them as they cross'd
The Till by Twisel Bridge.⁷⁵
High sight it is, and haughty, while
They dive into the deep defile;
Beneath the cavern'd cliff they fall,
Beneath the castle's airy wall.
By rock, by oak, by hawthorn-tree,
Troop after troop are disappearing;
Troop after troop their banners rearing,
Upon the eastern bank you see.
Still pouring down the rocky den,
Where flows the sullen Till,
And rising from the dim-wood glen,
Standards on standards, men on men,
In slow succession still,
And, sweeping o'er the Gothic arch,
And pressing on, in ceaseless march,
To gain the opposing hill.
That morn, to many a trumpet clang,
Twisel! thy rock's deep echo rang;
And many a chief of birth and rank,
Saint Helen! at thy fountain drank.
Thy hawthorn glade, which now we see
In spring-tide bloom so lavishly,
Had then from many an axe its doom,
To give the marching columns room.

XX.

And why stands Scotland idly now
Dark Flodden! on thy airy brow,
Since England gains the pass the while,
And struggles through the deep defile?
What checks the fiery soul of James?
Why sits that champion of the dames

Inactive on his steed,
 And sees, between him and his land,
 Between him and Tweed's southern strand,
 His host Lord Surrey lead?
 What 'vails the vain knight-errant's brand?—
 O, Douglas, for thy leading wand!
 Fierce Randolph, for thy speed!
 O for one hour of Wallace wight,
 Or well-skill'd Bruce to rule the fight,
 And cry—"Saint Andrew and our right!"
 Another sight had seen that morn,
 From Fate's dark book a leaf been torn,
 And Flodden had been Bannockbourne!--
 The precious hour has pass'd in vain,
 And England's host has gain'd the plain;
 Wheeling their march, and circling still,
 Around the base of Flodden hill.

XXI.

Ere yet the bands met Marmion's eye,
 Fitz-Eustace shouted loud and high,
 "Hark! hark! my lord, an English drum!
 And see ascending squadrons come
 Between Tweed's river and the hill,
 Foot, horse, and cannon:—hap what hap
 My basnet to a prentice cap,
 Lord Surrey's o'er the Till!—
 Yet more! yet more!—how far array'd
 They file from out the hawthorn shade,
 And sweep so gallant by!
 With all their banners bravely spread,
 And all their armour flashing high,
 Saint George might waken from the dead,
 To see fair England's standards fly."—
 "Stint in thy prate," quoth Blount, "thou'dst best,
 And listen to our lord's behest."—
 With kindling brow Lord Marmion said,—
 "This instant be our band array'd;
 The river must be quickly cross'd,
 That we may join Lord Surrey's host.
 If fight King James,—as well I trust,
 That fight he will, and fight he must,
 The Lady Clare behind our lines
 Shall tarry while the battle joins."

XXII.

Himself he swift on horseback threw,
 Scarce to the Abbot bade adieu;
 Far less would listen to his prayer,
 To leave behind the helpless Clare.
 Down to the Tweed his band he drew,
 And mutter'd, as the flood they view,
 "The pheasant in the falcon's claw,
 He scarce will yield to please a daw:
 Lord Angus may the Abbot awe,

So Clare shall bide with me."
Then on that dangerous ford, and deep,
Where to the Tweed Leat's eddies creep,
He ventured desperately:
And not a moment will he bide,
Till squire, or groom, before him ride;
Headmost of all he stems the tide,
And stems it gallantly.
Eustace held Clare upon her horse,
Old Hubert led her rein,
Stoutly they braved the current's course,
And, though far downward driven per force,
The southern bank they gain;
Behind them straggling, came to shore,
As best they might, the train:
Each o'er his head his yew-bow bore,
A caution not in vain:
Deep need that day, that every string,
By wet unharm'd, should sharply ring.
A moment then Lord Marmion staid,
And breathed his steed, his men array'd,
Then forward moved his band,
Until, Lord Surrey's rear-guard won,
He haulted by a Cross of Stone,
That on a hillock standing lone,
Did all the field command.

XXIII.

Hence might they see the full array
Of either host, for deadly fray;⁷⁶
Their marshall'd lines stretch'd east and west,
And fronted north and south,
And distant salutation pass'd
From the loud cannon mouth;
Not in the close successive rattle,
That breathes the voice of modern battle,
But slow and far between.—
The hillock gain'd, Lord Marmion staid:
"Here, by this Cross," he gently said,
"You well may view the scene.
Here shalt thou tarry, lovely Clare:
O! think of Marmion in thy prayer!—
Thou wilt not?—well,—no less my care
Shall, watchful, for thy weal prepare.—
You, Blount and Eustace, are her guard,
With ten pick'd archers of my train;
With England if the day go hard,
To Berwick speed amain.—
But if we conquer, cruel maid,
My spoils shall at your feet be laid,
When here we meet again."
He waited not for answer there,
And would not mark the maid's despair.

Nor heed the discontented look
 From either squire ; but spurr'd amain,
 And, dashing through the battle plain,
 His way to Surrey took.

XXIV.

"—The good Lord Marmion, by my life!
 Welcome to danger's hour!—
 Short greeting serves in time of strife:—
 Thus have I ranged my power:
 Myself will rule this central host,
 Stout Stanley fronts their right,
 My sons command the vanward post,
 With Brian Tunstall, stainless knight;⁷¹
 Lord Dacre, with his horseman light,
 Shall be in rear-ward of the fight,
 And succour those that need it most.
 Now gallant Marmion, well I know,
 Would gladly to the vanguard go;
 Edmund, the Admiral, Tunstall there,
 With thee their charge will blithely share;
 There fight thine own retainers too,
 Beneath De Burg, thy steward true."—
 "Thanks, noble Surrey!" Marmion said,
 Nor farther greeting there he paid;
 But parting like a thunderbolt,
 First in the vanguard made a halt,
 Where such a shout there rose
 Of "Marmion! Marmion!" that the cry
 Up Flodden Mountain shrilling high,
 Startled the Scottish foes.

XXV.

Blount and Fitz-Eustace rested still
 With Lady Clare upon the hill!
 On which, (for far the day was spent,)
 The western sunbeams now were bent.
 The cry they heard, its meaning knew,
 Could plain their distant comrades view:
 Sadly to Blount did Eustace say,
 "Unworthy office here to stay!
 No hope of gilded spurs to-day.—
 But see! look up!—on Flodden bent
 The Scottish foe has fired his tent."
 And sudden, as he spoke,
 From the sharp ridges of the hill,
 All downward to the banks of Till,
 Was wreathed in sable smoke.
 Volumed and fast, and rolling far,
 The cloud enveloped Scotland's war,
 As down the hill they broke;
 Nor martial shout, nor minstrel tone,
 Announced their march; their tread alone,
 At times one warning trumpet blown,
 At times a stifled hum,

Told England, from his mountain-throne
King James did rushing come.—
Scarce could they hear, or see their foes,
Until at weapon-point they close.—
They close, in clouds of smoke and dust,
With sword-sway, and with lance's thrust
And such a yell was there,
Of sudden and portentous birth,
As if men fought upon the earth,
And fiends in upper air;
Oh! life and death were in the shout,
Recoil and rally, charge and rout,
And triumph and despair.*
Long look'd the anxious squires; their eye
Could in the darkness nought descry.

XXVI.

At length the freshening western blast
Aside the shroud of battle cast;
And, first, the ridge of mingled spears
Above the brightening cloud appears;
And in the smoke the pennons flew,
As in the storm the white sea-mew.
Then mark'd they, dashing broad and far,
The broken billows of the war,
And plumed crests of chieftains brave,
Floating like foam upon the wave;
But nought distinct they see:
Wide raged the battle on the plain;
Spears shook, and falchions flash'd amain;
Fell England's arrow-flight like rain;
Crests rose, and stoop'd, and rose again,
Wild and disorderly.
Amid the scene of tumult, high
They saw Lord Marmion's falcon fly:
And stainless Tunstall's banner white,
And Edmund Howard's lion bright,
Still bear them bravely in the fight:
Although against them come,
Of gallant Gordons many a one,
And many a stubborn Badenoch-man,
And many a rugged Border clan,
With Huntly, and with Home.

XXVII.

Far on the left, unseen the while,
Stanley broke Lennox and Argyle;
Though there the western mountaineer
Rush'd with bare bosom on the spear,
And flung the feeble targe aside,
And with both hands the broadsword plied,
'T was vain:—But Fortune, on the right,
With fickle smile, cheer'd Scotland's fight.
Then fell that spotless banner white,
The Howard's lion fell;

Yet still Lord Marmion's falcon flew
 With wavering flight, while fiercer grew
 Around the battle-yell.
 The Border slogan rent the sky !
 A Home ! a Gordon ! was the cry
 Loud were the clanging blows ;
 Advanced,—forced back,—now low, now high,
 The pennon sunk and rose ;
 As bends the bark's mast in the gale,
 When rent are rigging, shrouds, and sail,
 It waver'd 'mid the foes.
 No longer Blount the view could bear :
 " By Heaven and all its saints I swear,
 I will not see it lost !
 Fitz-Eustace, you with Lady Clare
 May bid your beads, and patter prayer,—
 I gallop to the host."
 And to the fray he rode amain,
 Follow'd by all the archer train.
 The fiery youth, with desperate charge,
 Made, for a space, an opening large,—
 The rescued banner rose,—
 But darkly closed the war around,
 Like pine-tree, rooted from the ground,
 It sunk among the foes.
 Then Eustace mounted too :—yet staid,
 As loath to leave the helpless maid,
 When, fast as shaft can fly,
 Blood-shot his eyes, his nostrils spread,
 The loose rein dangling from his head,
 Housings and saddle bloody red,
 Lord Marmion's steed rush'd by ;
 And Eustace, maddening at the sight,
 A look and sign to Clara cast,
 To mark he would return in haste,
 Then plunged into the fight.

XXVIII.

Ask me not what the maiden feels,
 Left in that dreadful hour alone :
 Perchance her reason stoops, or reels ;
 Perchance a courage, not her own,
 Braces her mind to desperate tone. --
 The scatter'd van of England wheels ; --
 She only said, as loud in air
 The tumult roar'd, " Is Wilton there ?"—
 They fly, or, madden'd by despair,
 Fight but to die,— " Is Wilton there ?"
 With that, straight up the hill there rode
 Two horsemen drench'd with gore,
 And in their arms, a helpless load,
 A wounded knight they bore.
 His hand still strain'd the broken brand :
 His arms were smear'd with blood and sand :

Dragg'd from among the horses' feet,
 With dinted shield, and helmet beat,
 The falcon-crest and plumage gone,
 Can that be haughty Marmion!
 Young Blount his armour did unlace,
 And, gazing on his ghastly face,
 Said—"By Saint George, he's gone!
 That spear-wound has our master sped,
 And see the deep cut on his head!
 Good-night to Marmion."—
 "Unnurtured Blount! thy brawling cease:
 He opes his eyes," said Eustace; "peace!"

XXIX.

When, doff'd his casque, he felt free air,
 Around 'gan Marmion wildly stare:—
 "Where's Harry Blount? Fitz-Eustace where
 Linger ye here, ye hearts of hare!
 Redeem my pennon,—charge again!
 Cry—'Marmion to the rescue!'—Vain!
 Last of my race, on battle-plain
 That shout shall ne'er be heard again!—
 Yet my last thought is England's—fly,
 To Dacre bear my signet-ring:
 Tell him his squadrons up to bring.—
 Fitz-Eustace, to Lord Surrey hie;
 Tunstall lies dead upon the field,
 His life-blood stains the spotless shield:
 Edmund is down:—my life is left;
 The Admiral alone is left.
 Let Stanley charge with spur of fire,—
 With Chester charge, and Lancashire,
 Full upon Scotland's central host,
 Or victory and England's lost.—
 Must I bid twice?—hence, varlets! fly!
 Leave Marmion here alone—to die."
 They parted, and alone he lay;
 Clare drew her from the sight away,
 Till pain rung forth a lowly moan,
 And half he murmur'd,—“Is there none,
 Of all my halls have nursed,
 Page, squire, or groom, one cup to bring
 Of blessed water from the spring,
 To slake my dying thirst!”

XXX.

O, woman! in our hours of ease,
 Uncertain, coy, and hard to please,
 And variable as the shade
 By the light quivering aspen made;
 When pain and anguish ring the brow,
 A ministering angel thou!—
 Scarce were the piteous accents said,
 When, with the Baron's casque, the maid
 To the nigh streamlet ran:

Forgot were hatred, wrongs, and fears—
 The plaintive voice alone she hears,
 Sees but the dying man.
 She stoop'd her by the runnel's side,
 But in abhorrence backward drew;
 For, oozing from the mountain's side,
 Where raged the war, a dark-red tide
 Was curdling in the streamlet blue.
 Where shall she turn?—behold her mark
 A little fountain cell,
 Where water, clear as diamond-spark,
 In a stone basin fell.
 Above, some half-worn letters say,
Drink, weary pilgrim. Drink, and pray
For the kind soul of Sybil Gray.
 Who built this cross and well.
 She fill'd the helm, and back she hied,
 And with surprise and joy espied
 A Monk supporting Marmion's head—
 A pious man, whom duty brought
 To dubious verge of battle fought,
 To shrieve the dying, bless the dead.

XXXI.

Deep drank Lord Marmion of the wave,
 And, as she stoop'd his brow to lave—
 "Is it the hand of Clare," he said,
 "Or injured Constance, bathes my head?"
 Then, as remembrance rose,—
 Speak not to me of shrift or prayer!
 I must redress her woes.
 Short space, few words, are mine to spare;
 Forgive and listen, gentle Clare!"—
 "Alas!" she said, "the while,—
 O, think of your immortal weal!
 In vain for Constance is your zeal;
 She——died at Holy Isle."—
 Lord Marmion started from the ground,
 As light as if he felt no wound;
 Though in the action burst the tide,
 In torrents, from his wounded side.
 "Then it was truth," he said—"I knew
 That the dark presage must be true.—
 I would the Fiend, to whom belongs
 The vengeance due to all her wrongs,
 Would spare me but a day!
 For wasting fire, and dying groan,
 And priests slain on the altar stone
 Might bribe him for delay.
 It may not be!—this dizzy trance—
 Curse on yon base marauder's lance,
 And doubly cursed my failing brand
 A sinful heart makes feeble hand."
 Then, fainting, down on earth he sunk
 Supported by the trembling Monk.

XXXII.

With fruitless labour, Clara bound,
 And strove to stanch the gushing wound :
 The Monk, with unavailing cares,
 Exhausted all the Church's prayers.
 Ever, he said, that, close and near,
 A lady's voice was in his ear,
 And that the priest he could not hear,
 For that she ever sung,

*"In the lost battle, borne down by the flying,
 Where mingles war's rattle with groans of the dying."*

So the notes rung ;—

"Avoid thee, Fiend!—with cruel hand,
 Shake not the dying sinner's sand!—

O look, my son, upon yon sign
 Of the Redeemer's grace divine ;

O think on faith and bliss!—

By many a death-bed I have been,
 And many a sinner's parting seen,

But never aught like this."—

The war, that for a space did fail,
 Now trebly thundering swell'd the gale.

And—STANLEY! was the cry ;—

A light on Marmion's visage spread,

And fired his glazing eye :

With dying hand, above his head,
 He shook the fragment of his blade,

And shouted "Victory!—

Charge, Chester, charge! On, Stanley, on!"

Were the last words of Marmion.

XXXIII.

By this, though deep the evening fell,
 Still rose the battle's deadly swell,
 For still the Scots, around their King,
 Unbroken, fought in desperate ring.

Where's now their victor vanward wing,

Where Huntly, and where Home?—

O for a blast of that dread horn,

On Fontarabian echoes borne,

That to King Charles did come,

When Rowland brave, and Olivier,

And every paladin and peer,

On Roncesvalles died!

Such blast might warn them, not in vain,

To quit the plunder of the slain,

And turn the doubtful day again,

While yet on Flodden side,

Afar, the Royal Standard flies,

And round it toils, and bleeds, and dies,

Our Caledonian pride!

In vain the wish—for far away,

While spoil and havoc mark their way,

Near Sybil's Cross the plunderers stray.—

"O Lady," cried the Monk, "away!"

And placed her on her steed,
And led her to the chapel fair,
Of Tilmouth upon Tweed.
There all the night they spent in prayer,
And at the dawn of morning, there
She met her kinsman, Lord Fitz-Claire.

XXXIV.

But as they left the dark'ning heath,
More desperate grew the strife of death.
The English shafts in volleys hail'd,
In headlong charge their horse assail'd;
Front, flank, and rear, the squadrons sweep
To break the Scottish circle deep,
That fought around their King.
But yet, though thick the shafts as snow,
Though charging knights like whirlwinds go,
Though bill-men ply the ghastly blow,
Unbroken was the ring;
The stubborn spear-men still made good
Their dark impenetrable wood,
Each stepping where his comrade stood,
The instant that he fell.
No thought was there of dastard flight;
Link'd in the serried phalanx tight,
Groom fought like noble, squire like knight,
As fearlessly and well;
Till utter darkness closed her wing
O'er their thin host and wounded King.
Then skilful Surrey's sage commands
Led back from strife his shatter'd bands;
And from the charge they drew,
As mountain-waves, from wasted lands,
Sweep back to ocean blue.
Then did their loss his foemen know;
Their King, their Lords, their mightiest low,
They melted from the field, as snow,
When streams are swoln and south winds blow,
Dissolves in silent dew.
Tweed's echoes heard the ceaseless plash,
While many a broken band,
Disorder'd, through her currents dash,
To gain the Scottish land;
To town and tower, to down and dale,
To tell red Flodden's dismal tale,
And raise the universal wail.
Tradition, legend, tune, and song,
Shall many an age that wail prolong:
Still from the sire the son shall hear
Of the stern strife, and carnage drear,
Of Flodden's fatal field,
Where shiver'd was fair Scotland's spear,
And broken was her shield!

XXXV.

Day dawns upon the mountain's side :—
There, Scotland ! lay thy bravest pride,
Chiefs, knights, and nobles, many a one :
The sad survivors all are gone.—
View not that corpse mistrustfully,
Defaced and mangled though it be ;
Nor to yon Border castle high,
Look northward with upbraiding eye ;
 Nor cherish hope in vain,
That, journeying far on foreign strand,
The Royal Pilgrim to his land
 May yet return again.
He saw the wreck his rashness wrought ;
Reckless of life, he desperate fought,
 And fell on Flodden plain :
And well in death his trusty brand,
Firm clench'd within his manly hand,
 Beseeem'd the Monarch slain.⁷⁸
But, O ! how changed since yon blithe night !—
Gladly I turn me from the sight,
 Unto my tale again.

XXXVI.

Short is my tale :—Fitz-Eustace' care
A pierced and mangled body bare
To moated Lichfield's lofty pile ;
And there, beneath the southern aisle,
A tomb, with Gothic sculpture fair,
Did long Lord Marmion's image bear,
(Now vainly for its sight you look ;
'Twas levell'd when fanatic Brook
The fair cathedral storm'd and took ;⁷⁹
But, thanks to Heaven and good Saint Chad !
A guerdon meet the spoiler had.)
There erst was martial Marmion found,
His feet upon a couchant hound,
 His hands to heaven upraised ;
And all around, on scutcheon rich,
And tablet carved, and fretted niche,
 His arms and feats were blazed.
And yet, though all was carved so fair,
And priest for Marmion breathed the prayer,
The last Lord Marmion lay not there.
From Ettrick woods, a peasant swain
Follow'd his lord to Flodden plain,—
One of those flowers whom plaintive lay
In Scotland mourns as "wede away :"
Sore wounded, Sybil's Cross he spied,
And dragg'd him to its foot, and died,
Close by the noble Marmion's side.
The spoilers stripp'd and gash'd the slain,
And thus their corpses were mista'en ;
And thus, in the proud Baron's tomb,
The lowly woodsman took the room.

XXXVII.

Less easy task it were, to show
 Lord Marmion's nameless grave, and low.
 They dug his grave e'en where he lay,
 But every mark is gone;
 Time's wasting hand has done away
 The simple Cross of Sybil Gray,
 And broke her font of stone:
 But yet out from the little hill
 Oozes the slender springlet still.
 Oft halts the stranger there,
 For thence may best his curious eye
 The memorable field descry;
 And shepherd boys repair
 To seek the water-flag and rush,
 And rest them by the hazel bush,
 And plait their garlands fair;
 Nor dream they sit upon the grave
 That holds the bones of Marmion brave.—
 When thou shalt find the little hill,
 With thy heart commune, and be still.
 If ever, in temptation strong,
 Thou left'st the right path for the wrong;
 If every devious step, thus trod,
 Still led thee further from the road;
 Dread thou to speak presumptuous doom
 On noble Marmion's lowly tomb;
 But say, "He died a gallant knight,
 With sword in hand, for England's right."

XXXVIII.

I do not rhyme to that dull elf,
 Who cannot image to himself,
 That all through Flodden's dismal night,
 Wilton was foremost in the fight;
 That, when brave Surrey's steed was slain,
 'Twas Wilton mounted him again;
 'Twas Wilton's brand that deepest hew'd,
 Amid the spearman's stubborn wood:
 Unnamed by Hollinshed or Hall,
 He was the living soul of all;
 That, after fight, his faith made plain,
 He won his rank and lands again;
 And charged his old paternal shield
 With bearings won on Flodden Field.
 Nor sing I to that simple maid,
 To whom it must in terms be said,
 That King and kinsmen did agree
 To bless fair Clara's constancy;
 Who cannot, unless I relate,
 Paint to her mind the bridal's state;
 That Wolsey's voice the blessing spoke,
 More, Sands, and Denny, pass'd the joke:
 That bluff King Hal the curtain drew,
 And Catherine's hand the stocking threw:

And afterwards, for many a day,
That it was held enough to say,
In blessing to a wedded pair,
"Love they like Wilton and like Clare!"



*Eustace held Clare upon her horse,
Old Hubert led her rein.*

L'Envoy.

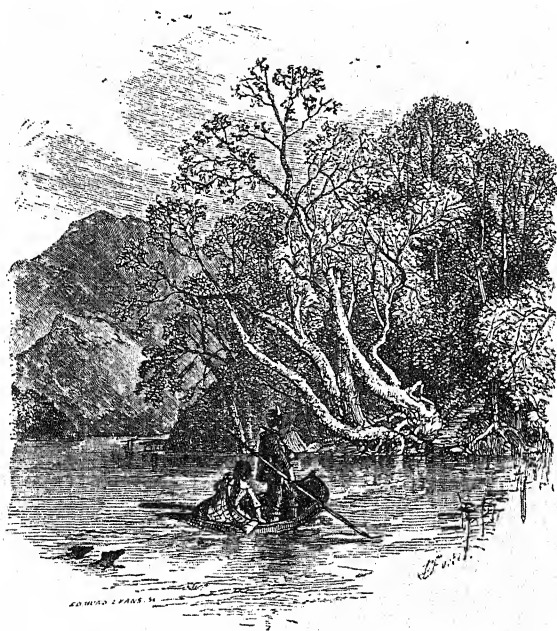
TO THE READER.

Why then a final note prolong,
 Or lengthen out a closing song,
 Who long have listed to my rede?
 To Statesmen grave, if such may deign
 To read the Minstrel's idle strain,
 Sound head, clean hand, and piercing wit,
 And patriotic heart—as PITT!
 A garland for the hero's crest,
 And twined by her he loves the best;
 To every lovely lady bright,
 What can I wish but faithful knight?
 To every faithful lover too,
 What can I wish but lady true?
 And knowledge to the studious sage;
 And pillow to the head of age.
 To thee, dear school-boy, whom my lay
 Has cheated of thy hour of play,
 Light task, and merry holiday!
 To all, to each, a fair good-night,
 And pleasing dreams and slumbers light!



BATTLEFIELD OF FLODDEN.

THE
LADY OF THE LAKE:



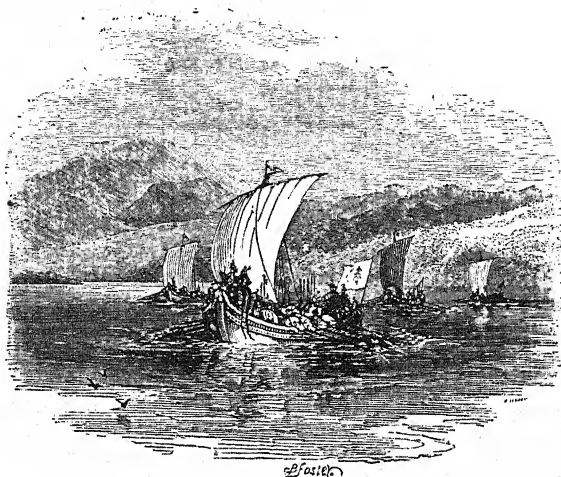
A POEM, IN SIX CANTOS.

TO THE MOST NOBLE

JOHN JAMES, MARQUIS OF ABERCORN,

THIS POEM IS INSCRIBED BY

THE AUTHOR.



RODERICK'S FLEET ON LOCH KATRINE.

*And near, and nearer as they row'd,
Distinct the martial ditty flow'd.*

INTRODUCTION.

AFTER the success of "Marmion," I felt inclined to exclaim with Ulysses in the Odyssey—

"One venturous game my hand has won to-day—
Another, gallants, yet remains to play."

The ancient manners, the habits and customs of the aboriginal race by whom the Highlands of Scotland were inhabited, had always appeared to me peculiarly adapted to poetry. The change in their manners, too, had taken place almost within my own time, or at least I had learned many particulars concerning the ancient state of the Highlands from the old men of the last generation. I had always thought the old Scottish Gael highly adapted for poetical composition. The feuds, and political dissensions, which, half-a-century earlier, would have rendered the richer and wealthier part of the kingdom indisposed to countenance a poem, the scene of which was laid in the Highlands, were now sunk in the generous compassion which the English, more than any other nation, feel for the misfortunes of an honourable foe. The Poems of Ossian had, by their popularity, sufficiently shown, that if writings on Highland subjects were qualified to interest the reader, mere national prejudices were, in the present day, very unlikely to interfere with their success.

I had also read a great deal, seen much, and heard more, of that romantic country, where I was in the habit of spending some time

every autumn; and the scenery of Loch Katrine was connected with the recollection of many a dear friend and merry expedition of former days. This poem, the action of which lay among scenes so beautiful, and so deeply imprinted on my recollection, was a labour of love, and it was no less so to recall the manners and incidents introduced. The frequent custom of James IV., and particularly of James V., to walk through their kingdom in disguise, afforded me the hint of an incident, which never fails to be interesting, if managed with the slightest address or dexterity.

I may now confess, however, that the employment, though attended with great pleasure, was not without its doubts and anxieties. A lady, to whom I was nearly related, and with whom I lived, during her whole life, on the most brotherly terms of affection, was residing with me at the time when the work was in progress, and used to ask me, what I could possibly do to rise so early in the morning, (that happening to be the most convenient time to me for composition.) At last I told her the subject of my meditations; and I can never forget the anxiety and affection expressed in her reply. "Do not be so rash," she said, "my dearest cousin. You are already popular—more so, perhaps, than you yourself will believe, or than even I, or other partial friends, can fairly allow to your merit. You stand high—do not rashly attempt to climb higher, and incur the risk of a fall; for, depend upon it, a favourite will not be permitted even to stumble with impunity." I replied to this affectionate expostulation in the words of Montrose—

"He either fears his fate too much,
Or his deserts are small,
Who dares not put it to the touch
To gain or lose it all."

"If I fail," I said, for the dialogue is strong in my recollection, "it is a sign that I ought never to have succeeded, and I will write prose for life: you shall see no change in my temper, nor will I eat a single meal the worse. But if I succeed,

'Up with the bonnie blue bonnet
The dirk, and the feather, and a'!'"

Afterwards I showed my affectionate and anxious critic the first canto of the poem, which reconciled her to my imprudence. Nevertheless, although I answered thus confidently, with the obstinacy often said to be proper to those who bear my surname, I acknowledge that my confidence was considerably shaken by the warning of her excellent taste and unbiassed friendship. Nor was I much comforted by her retraction of the unfavourable judgment, when I recollected how likely a natural partiality was to affect that change of opinion. In such cases, affection rises like a light on the canvass, improves any favourable tints which it formerly exhibited, and throws its defects into the shade.

I remember that about the same time a friend started in to "heeze up my hope," like the "sportsman with his cutty-gun," in the old song. He was bred a farmer, but a man of powerful understanding, natural good taste, and warm poetical feeling, perfectly competent to supply the wants of an imperfect or irre-

gular education. He was a passionate admirer of field-sports, which we often pursued together.

As this friend happened to dine with me at Ashestiel one day, I took the opportunity of reading to him the first canto of "The Lady of the Lake," in order to ascertain the effect the poem was likely to produce upon a person who was but too favourable a representative of readers at large. It is, of course, to be supposed, that I determined rather to guide my opinion by what my friend might appear to feel, than by what he might think fit to say. His reception of my recitation, or prelection, was rather singular. He placed his hand across his brow, and listened with great attention through the whole account of the stag-hunt, till the dogs threw themselves into the lake to follow their master, who embarks with Ellen Douglas. He then started up with a sudden exclamation, struck his hand on the table, and declared, in a voice of censure calculated for the occasion, that the dogs must have been totally ruined by being permitted to take the water after such a severe chase. I own I was much encouraged by the species of reverie which had possessed so zealous a follower of the sports of the ancient Nimrod, who had been completely surprised out of all doubts of the reality of the tale. Another of his remarks gave me less pleasure. He detected the identity of the King with the wandering knight, Fitz-James, when he winds his bugle to summon his attendants. He was probably thinking of the lively, but somewhat licentious, old ballad, in which the denouement of a royal intrigue takes place as follows:—

"He took a bugle frae his side,
He blew both loud and shrill,
And four-and-twenty belted knights
Came skipping ower the hill;
Then he took out a little knife,
Let a' his duddies fa',
And he was the brawest gentleman
That was amang them a'.
And we'll go no more a-roving," &c."

This discovery, as Mr Pepys says of the rent in his camlet cloak, was but a trifle, yet it troubled me; and I was at a good deal of pains to efface any marks by which I thought my secret could be traced before the conclusion, when I relied on it with the same hope of producing effect, with which the Irish post-boy is said to reserve a "trot for the avenue."

I took uncommon pains to verify the accuracy of the local circumstances of this story. I recollect, in particular, that to ascertain whether I was telling a probable tale, I went into Perthshire, to see whether King James could actually have ridden from the banks of Loch Vennachar to Stirling Castle within the time supposed in the Poem, and had the pleasure to satisfy myself that it was quite practicable.

After a considerable delay, "The Lady of the Lake" appeared in May, 1810; and its success was certainly so extraordinary as to induce me for the moment to conclude that I had at last fixed a nail in the proverbially inconstant wheel of Fortune, whose sta-

* The Jolly Beggar, attributed to King James V.—*Herd's Collection*, 1776.

bility in behalf of an individual who had so boldly courted her favours for three successive times had not as yet been shaken. I had attained, perhaps, that degree of public reputation at which prudence, or certainly timidity, would have made a halt, and discontinued efforts by which I was far more likely to diminish my fame than to increase it. But, as the celebrated John Wilkes is said to have explained to his late Majesty, that he himself, amid his full tide of popularity, was never a Wilkite, so I can, with honest truth, exculpate myself from having been at any time a partisan of my own poetry, even when it was in the highest fashion with the million. It must not be supposed that I was either so ungrateful, or so superabundantly candid, as to despise or scorn the value of those whose voice had elevated me so much higher than my own opinion told me I deserved. I felt, on the contrary the more grateful to the public, as receiving that from partiality to me, which I could not have claimed from merit; and I endeavoured to deserve the partiality, by continuing such exertions as I was capable of for their amusement.

It may be that I did not, in this continued course of scribbling, consult either the interest of the public or my own. But the former had effectual means of defending themselves, and could, by their coldness, sufficiently check any approach to intrusion; and for myself, I had now for several years dedicated my hours so much to literary labour, that I should have felt difficulty in employing myself otherwise; and so, like Dogberry, I generously bestowed all my tediousness on the public, comforting myself with the reflection, that if posterity should think me undeserving of the favour with which I was regarded by my contemporaries, "they could not but say I *had* the crown," and had enjoyed for a time that popularity which is so much coveted.

I conceived, however, that I held the distinguished situation I had obtained, however unworthily, rather like the champion of pugilism,^a on the condition of being always ready to show proofs of my skill, than in the manner of the champion of chivalry, who performs his duties only on rare and solemn occasions. I was in any case conscious that I could not long hold a situation which the caprice, rather than the judgment, of the public, had bestowed upon me, and preferred being deprived of my precedence by some more worthy rival, to sinking into contempt for my indolence, and losing my reputation by what Scottish lawyers call the *negative prescription*. Accordingly, those who choose to look at the Introduction to Rokeby, in the present edition will be able to trace the steps by which I declined as a poet to figure as a novelist; as the ballad says, Queen Eleanor sunk at Charing-Cross to rise again at Queenhithe.

It only remains for me to say, that, during my short pre-eminence of popularity, I faithfully observed the rules of moderation which I had resolved to follow before I began my course as a man of letters. If a man is determined to make a noise in the

^a "In twice five years the 'greatest living poet,'

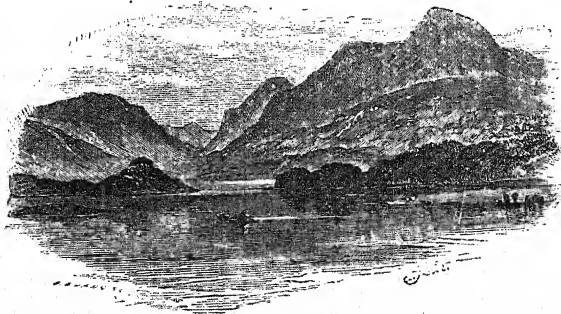
Like to the champion in the fisty ring,
Is call'd on to support his claim, or show it,
Although 'tis an imaginary thing," &c.

Don Juan, canto xi. st. 55.

world, he is as sure to encounter abuse and ridicule, as he who gallops furiously through a village must reckon on being followed by the curs in full cry. Experienced persons know, that in stretching to flog the latter, the rider is very apt to catch a bad fall; nor is an attempt to chastise a malignant critic attended with less danger to the author. On this principle, I let parody, burlesque, and squibs, find their own level; and while the latter hissed most fiercely, I was cautious never to catch them up, as schoolboys do, to throw them back against the naughty boy who fired them off, wisely remembering that they are, in such cases apt to explode in the handling. Let me add, that my reign^a (since Byron has so called it) was marked by some instances of good-nature as well as patience. I never refused a literary person of merit such services in smoothing his way to the public as were in my power: and I had the advantage, rather an uncommon one with our irritable race, to enjoy general favour, without incurring permanent ill-will, so far as is known to me, among any of my contemporaries.

W. S.

ABBOTSFORD April 1830.

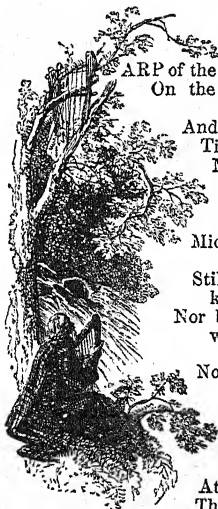


LOCH LOMOND.



CANTO FIRST.

The Chase.



ARP of the North! that mouldering long hast hung
On the witch-elm that shades Saint Fillan's
spring,
And down the fitful breeze thy numbers flung,
Till envious ivy did around thee cling,
Muffling with verdant ringlet every
string,—
O Minstrel Harp, still must thine ac-
cents sleep?
Mid rustling leaves and fountains murmur-
ing,
Still must thy sweeter sounds their silence
keep,
Nor bid a warrior smile, nor teach a maid to
weep?
Not thus, in ancient days of Caledon,
Was thy voice mute amid the festal
crowd,
When lay of hopeless love, or glory won,
Aroused the fearful, or subdued the
proud.
At each according pause, was heard aloud
Thine ardent symphony sublime and high!
Fair dames and crested chiefs attention bow'd;
For still the burden of thy minstrelsy
Was Knighthood's dauntless deed, and Beauty's matchless
eye.

O wake once more! how rude soe'er the hand
That ventures o'er thy magic maze to stray;
O wake once more! though scarce my skill command
Some feeble echoing of thine earlier lay:
Though harsh and faint, and soon to die away,
And all unworthy of thy nobler strain,
Yet if one heart throb higher at its sway,
The wizard note has not been touch'd in vain,
Then silent be no more! Enchantress, wake again!

I.

The stag at eve had drunk his fill,
Where danced the moon on Monan's rill,
And deep his midnight lair had made
In lone Glenartney's hazel shade;
But, when the sun his beacon red
Had kindled on Benvoirlich's head,
The deep-mouth'd bloodhound's heavy bay
Resounded up the rocky way,
And faint, from farther distance borne,
Were heard the clanging hoof and horn.

II.

As Chief, who hears his warder call,
"To arms! the foemen storm the wall,"
The antler'd monarch of the waste
Sprung from his heathery couch in haste.
But, ere his fleet career he took,
The dew-drops from his flanks he shook;
Like crested leader proud and high,
Toss'd his beam'd frontlet to the sky;
A moment gazed adown the dale,
A moment snuff'd the tainted gale,
A moment listen'd to the cry,
That thicken'd as the chase drew nigh;
Then, as the headmost foes appear'd,
With one brave bound the copse he clear'd,
And, stretching forward free and far,
Sought the wild-heaths of Uam-Var.

III.

Yell'd on the view the opening pack;
Rock, glen, and cavern, paid them back;
To many a mingled sound at once
The awaken'd mountain gave response.
A hundred dogs bay'd deep and strong,
Clatter'd a hundred steeds along,
Their peal the merry horns rung out,
A hundred voices join'd the shout;
With hark and whoop and wild halloo,
No rest Benvoirlich's echoes knew.
Far from the tumult fled the roe,
Close in her covert cower'd the doe;
The falcon, from her cairn on high,
Cast on the rout a wondering eye,
Till far beyond her piercing ken
The hurricane had swept the glen.
Faint, and more faint, its failing din
Return'd from cavern, cliff, and linn,
And silence settled, wide and still,
On the lone wood and mighty hill.

IV.

Less loud the sounds of silvan war
Disturb'd the heights of Uam-Var,

And roused the cavern, where, 'tis told,
A giant made his den of old;¹
For ere that steep ascent was won,
High in his pathway hung the sun,
And many a gallant, stay'd perforce,
Was fain to breathe his faltering horse,
And of the trackers of the deer,
Scarce half the lessening pack was near;
So shrewdly on the mountain side,
Had the bold burst their mettle tried.

V.

The noble stag was pausing now
Upon the mountain's southern brow,
Where broad extended, far beneath,
The varied realms of fair Menteith.
With anxious eye he wander'd o'er
Mountain and meadow, moss and moor,
And ponder'd refuge from his toil,
By far Lochard or Aberfoyle.
But nearer was the copsewood grey,
That waved and wept on Loch-Achray,
And mingled with the pine-trees blue
On the bold cliffs of Benvenue.
Fresh vigour with the hope return'd,
With flying foot the heath he spurn'd,
Held westward with unwearied race,
And left behind the panting chase.

VI.

'T were long to tell what steeds gave o'er,
As swept the hunt through Cambus-more;
What reins were tighten'd in despair,
When rose Benledi's ridge in air;
Who flagg'd upon Bochastle's heath,
Who shunn'd to stem the flooded Teith,—
For twice that day, from shore to shore,
The gallant stag swam stoutly o'er.
Few were the stragglers, following far,
That reach'd the lake of Vennachar;
And when the Brigg of Turk was won,
The headmost horseman rode alone.

VII.

Alone, but with unabated zeal,
That horseman plied the scourge and steel
For jaded now, and spent with toil,
Emboss'd with foam, and dark with soil,
While every gasp with sobs he drew,
The labouring stag strain'd full in view.
Two dogs of black Saint Hubert's breed,
Unmatch'd for courage, breath, and speed²

¹ See Note 1 of the "NOTES TO THE LADY OF THE LAKE" in the Appendix. The figures of reference throughout the poem relate to further notes in the Appendix.

Fast on his flying traces came,
And all but won that desperate game;
For, scarce a spear's length from his haunch,
Vindictive toil'd the bloodhounds stanch;
Nor nearer might the dogs attain,
Nor farther might the quarry strain.
Thus up the margin of the lake,
Between the precipice and brake,
O'er stock and rock their race they take.

VIII.

The Hunter mark'd that mountain high,
The lone lake's western boundary,
And deem'd the stag must turn to bay,
Where that huge rampart barr'd the way;
Already glorying in the prize,
Measured his antlers with his eyes;
For the death-wound and death-halloo,
Muster'd his breath, his whinyard drew;—³
But thundering as he came prepared,
With ready arm and weapon bared,
The wily quarry shunn'd the shock,
And turn'd him from the opposing rock;
Then, dashing down a darksome glen,
Soon lost to hound and Hunter's ken,
In the deep Trosachs' wildest nook
His solitary refuge took.
There, while close couch'd, the thicket shed
Cold dews and wild-flowers on his head,
He heard the baffled dogs in vain
Rave through the hollow pass amain,
Chiding the rocks that yell'd again.

IX.

Close on the hounds the Hunter came,
To cheer them on the vanish'd game;
But, stumbling in the rugged dell,
The gallant horse exhausted fell.
The impatient rider strove in vain
To rouse him with the spur and rein,
For the good steed, his labours o'er,
Stretch'd his stiff limbs, to rise no more;
Then, touch'd with pity and remorse,
He sorrow'd o'er the expiring horse.
"I little thought, when first thy rein
I slack'd upon the banks of Seine,
That Highland eagle e'er should feed
On thy fleet limbs, my matchless steed!
Woe worth the chase, woe worth the day,
That costs thy life, my gallant grey!"

X.

Then through the dell his horn resounds,
From vain pursuit to call the hounds.

Back limp'd, with slow and crippled pace,
The sulky leaders of the chase;
Close to their master's side they press'd,
With drooping tail and humbled crest;
But still the dingle's hollow throat
Prolong'd the swelling bugle-note.
The owlets started from their dream,
The eagles answer'd with their scream,
Round and around the sounds were cast,
Till echo seem'd an answering blast;
And on the Hunter bied his way,
To join some comrades of the day;
Yet often paused, so strange the road,
So wondrous were the scenes it show'd.

XI.

The western waves of ebbing day
Roll'd o'er the glen their level way;
Each purple peak, each flinty spire,
Was bathed in floods of living fire.
But not a setting beam could glow
Within the dark ravines below,
Where twined the path in shadow hid,
Round many a rocky pyramid,
Shooting abruptly from the dell
Its thunder-splinter'd pinnacle;
Round many an insulated mass,
The native bulwarks of the pass,
Huge as the tower which builders vain
Presumptuous piled on Shinar's plain.
The rocky summits, split and rent,
Form'd turret, dome, or battlement,
Or seem'd fantastically set
With cupola or minaret,
Wild crests as pagod ever deck'd,
Or mosque of Eastern architect.
Nor were these earth-born castles bare,
Nor lack'd they many a banner fair;
For, from their shiver'd brows display'd,
Far o'er the unfathomable glade,
All twinkling with the dewdrops sheen,
The briar-rose fell in streamers green,
And creeping shrubs, of thousand dyes,
Waved in the west-wind's summer sighs.

XII.

Boon nature scatter'd, free and wild,
Each plant or flower, the mountain's child.
Here eglantine embalm'd the air,
Hawthorn and hazel mingled there;
The primrose pale and violet flower,
Found in each cliff a narrow bower;
Fox-glove and night-shade, side by side,
Emblems of punishment and pride,

Group'd their dark hues with every stain
 The weather-beaten crags retain,
 With boughs that quaked at every breath.
 Grey birch and aspen wept beneath;
 Aloft, the ash and warrior oak
 Cast anchor in the rifted rock;
 And, higher yet, the pine-tree hung
 His shatter'd trunk, and frequent flung,
 Where seem'd the cliffs to meet on high,
 His boughs athwart the narrow'd sky.
 Highest of all, where white peaks glanced,
 Where glist'ning streamers waved and danced,
 The wanderer's eye could barely view
 The summer heaven's delicious blue;
 So wondrous wild, the whole might seem
 The scenery of a fairy dream.

XIII.

Onward, amid the copse 'gan peep
 A narrow inlet, still and deep,
 Affording scarce such breadth of brim
 As served the wild duck's brood to swim.
 Lost for a space, through thickets veering,
 But broader when again appearing,
 Tall rocks and tufted knolls their face
 Could on the dark-blue mirror trace;
 And farther as the Hunter stray'd,
 Still broader sweep its channels made.
 The shaggy mounds no longer stood,
 Emerging from entangled wood,
 But, wave-encircled, seem'd to float,
 Like castle girdled with its moat;
 Yet broader floods extending still
 Divide them from their parent hill,
 Till each, retiring, claims to be
 An islet in an inland sea.

XIV.

And now, to issue from the glen,
 No pathway meets the wanderer's ken,
 Unless he climb, with footing nice,
 A far projecting precipice.^a
 The broom's tough roots his ladder made,
 The hazel saplings lent their aid;
 And thus an airy point he won,
 Where, gleaming with the setting sun,
 One burnish'd sheet of living gold,
 Loch Katrine lay beneath him roll'd,^a
 In all her length far winding lay,
 With promontory, creek, and bay,
 And islands that, empurpled bright,
 Floated amid the livelier light,

^a Loch-Ketturin is the Celtic pronunciation. In his notes to *The Fair Maid of Perth*, the author has signified his belief that the lake was named after the *Catterins*, or wild robbers, who haunted its shores

And mountains, that like giants stand,
 To sentinel enchanted land.
 High on the south, huge Benvenue^a
 Down on the lake in masses threw
 Craggs, knolls, and mounds, confusedly hurl'd,
 The fragments of an earlier world;
 A wildering forest feather'd o'er
 His ruin'd sides and summit hoar,
 While on the north, through middle air
 Ben-an heaved high his forehead bare.

XV.

From the steep promontory gazed
 The stranger, raptured and amazed.
 And, "What a scene were here," he cried,
 "For princely pomp, or churchman's pride!
 On this bold brow, a lordly tower;
 In that soft vale, a lady's bower;
 On yonder meadow, far away,
 The turrets of a cloister grey;
 How blithely might the bugle-horn
 Chide, on the lake, the lingering morn!
 How sweet, at eve, the lover's lute
 Chime, when the groves were still and mute!
 And, when the midnight moon should lave
 Her forehead in the silver wave,
 How solemn on the ear would come
 The holy matins' distant hum,
 While the deep peal's commanding tone
 Should wake, in yonder islet lone,
 A sainted hermit from his cell,
 To drop a bead with every knell—
 And bugle, lute, and bell, and all,
 Should each bewilder'd stranger call
 To friendly feast, and lighted hall.

XVI.

"Blithe were it then to wander here!
 But now,—beshrew yon nimble deer,
 Like that same hermit's thin and spare,
 The copse must give my evening fare;
 Some mossy bank my couch must be,
 Some rustling oak my canopy.
 Yet pass we that; the war and chase
 Give little choice of resting-place;—
 A summer night, in greenwood spent,
 Were but to-morrow's merriment:
 But hosts may in these wilds abound,
 Such as are better miss'd than found;
 To meet with Highland plunderers here
 Were worse than loss of steed or deer.—
 I am alone;—my bugle strain
 May call some straggler of the train;

^a Benvenue is literally the little mountain—i.e. as contrasted with Ben
 .edi and Benlomond

Or, fall the worse that may betide,
Ere now this falchion has been tried."

XVII.

But scarce again his horn he wound,
When lo! forth starting at the sound,
From underneath an aged oak,
That slanted from the islet rock,
A damsel guider of its way,
A little skiff shot to the bay,
'That round the promontory steep
Led its deep line in graceful sweep,
Eddying, in almost viewless wave,
The weeping willow twig to lave,
And kiss, with whispering sound and slow,
The beach of pebbles bright as snow.
The boat had touched the silver strand,
Just as the Hunter left his stand,
And stood conceal'd amid the brake,
To view this Lady of the Lake.
The maiden paused, as if again
She thought to catch the distant strain.
With head up-raised, and look intent,
And eye and ear attentive bent,
And locks flung back, and lips apart,
Like monument of Grecian art,
In listening mood, she seem'd to stand,
The guardian Naiad of the strand.

XVIII.

And ne'er did Grecian chisel trace
A Nymph, a Naiad, or a Grace,
Of finer form, or lovelier face!
What though the sun, with ardent frown,
Had slightly tinged her cheek with brown,—
The sportive toil, which, short and light,
Had dyed her glowing hue so bright,
Served too in hastier swell to show
Short glimpses of a breast of snow:
What though no rule of courtly grace
To measur'd mood had train'd her pace,—
A foot more light, a step more true,
Ne'er from the heath-flower dash'd the dew;
E'en the slight harebell raised its head,
Elastic from her airy tread:
What though upon her speech there hung
The accents of the mountain tongue,—
Those silver sounds, so soft, so dear,
The list'ner held his breath to hear!

XIX.

A chieftain's daughter seem'd the maid;
Her satin snood,^a her silken plaid,
Her golden brooch such birth betray'd.

^a See Note on Canto III., stanza 5.

And seldom was a snood amid
Such wild luxuriant ringlets hid,
Whose glossy black to shame might bring
The plumage of the raven's wing;
And seldom o'er a breast so fair,
Mantled a plaid with modest care,
And never brooch the folds combined
Above a heart more good and kind.
Her kindness and her worth to spy,
You need but gaze on Ellen's eye;
Not Katrine, in her mirror blue,
Gives back the shaggy banks more true,
Than every free-born glance confess'd
The guileless movements of her breast;
Whether joy danced in her dark eye,
Or woe or pity claimed a sigh,
Or filial love was glowing there,
Or meek devotion pour'd a prayer,
Or tale of injury called forth
The indignant spirit of the North.
One only passion unreveal'd,
With maiden pride the maid conceal'd,
Yet not less purely felt the flame;—
O! need I tell that passion's name?

XX.

Impatient of the silent horn,
Now on the gale her voice was borne:—
"Father!" she cried; the rocks around
Loved to prolong the gentle sound.
A while she paused, no answer came,—
"Malcolm, was thine the blast?" the name
Less resolutely utter'd fell,
The echoes could not catch the swell.
"A stranger I," the Huntsman said,
Advancing from the hazel shade.
The maid, alarm'd, with hasty oar,
Push'd her light shallop from the shore
And when a space was gain'd between,
Closer she drew her bosom's screen;
(So forth the startled swan would swing
So turn to prune his ruffled wing.)
Then safe, though flutter'd and amazed,
She paused, and on the stranger gazed.
Not his the form, nor his the eye,
That youthful maidens wont to fly.

XXI.

On his bold visage middle age
Had slightly press'd its signet sage,
Yet had not quench'd the open truth
And fiery vehemence of youth;
Forward and frolic glee was there,
The will to do, the soul to dare,

The sparkling glance, soon blown to fire,
 Of hasty love, or headlong ire.
 His limbs were cast in manly mould,
 For hardy sports or contest bold;
 And though in peaceful garb array'd,
 And weaponless except his blade,
 His stately mien as well implied
 A high-born heart, a martial pride,
 As if a Baron's crest he wore,
 And sheathed in armour trod the shore.
 Slighting the petty need he show'd,
 He told of his benighted road;
 His ready speech flow'd fair and free,
 In phrase of gentlest courtesy;
 Yet seem'd that tone, and gesture bland,
 Less used to sue than to command.

XXII.

A while the maid the stranger eyed,
 And, reassured, at length replied,
 That Highland halls were open still
 To wilder'd wanderers of the hill.
 "Nor think you unexpected come
 To yon lone isle, our desert home;
 Before the heath had lost the dew,
 This morn, a couch was pull'd for you;
 On yonder mountain's purple head
 Have ptarmigan and heath-cock bled,
 And our broad nets have swept the mere,
 To furnish forth your evening cheer."—
 "Now, by the rood, my lovely maid,
 Your courtesy has err'd," he said;
 "No right have I to claim, misplaced,
 The welcome of expected guest.
 A wanderer, here by fortune tost,
 My way, my friends, my courser lost,
 I ne'er before, believe me, fair,
 Have ever drawn your mountain air,
 Till on this lake's romantic strand,
 I found a fay in fairy land!"—

XXIII.

"I well believe," the maid replied,
 As her light skiff approach'd the side,—
 "I well believe, that ne'er before
 Your foot has trod Loch Katrine's shore;
 But yet, as far as yesternight,
 Old Allan-Bane foretold your plight,—
 A grey-hair'd sire, whose eye intent
 Was on the vision'd future bent.⁶
 He saw your steed, a dappled grey;
 Lie dead beneath the birchen way;
 Painted exact your form and mien,
 Your hunting suit of Lincoln green,

That tassell'd horn so gaily gilt,
That falchion's crooked blade and hilt,
That cap with heron plumage trim,
And yon two hounds so dark and grim.
He bade that all should ready be,
To grace a guest of fair degree;
But light I held his prophecy,
And deem'd it was my father's horn,
Whose echoes o'er the lake were borne."

XXIV.

The stranger smiled :—" Since to your home
A destined errant-knight I come,
Announced by prophet sooth and old,
Doom'd, doubtless, for achievement bold,
I'll lightly front each high emprise,
For one kind glance of those bright eyes.
Permit me, first, the task to guide
Your fairy frigate o'er the tide."
The maid, with smile suppress'd and sly,
The toil unwonted saw him try;
For seldom sure, if e'er before,
His noble hand had grasp'd an oar :
Yet with main strength his strokes he drew,
And o'er the lake the shallop flew ;
With heads erect, and whimpering cry,
The hounds behind their passage ply.
Nor frequent does the bright oar break
The darkening murmur of the lake,
Until the rocky isle they reach,
And moor their shallop on the beach.

XXV.

The stranger view'd the shore around ;
"T was all so close with copsewood bound,
Nor track nor pathway might declare
That human foot frequented there.
Until the mountain-maiden show'd
A clambering unsuspected road,
That winded through the tangled screen,
And open'd on a narrow green,
Where weeping birch and willow round
With their long fibres swept the ground.
Here, for retreat in dangerous hour,
Some chief had framed a rustic bower."

XXVI.

It was a lodge of ample size,
But strange of structure and device ;
Of such materials, as around
The workman's hand had readiest found.
Lopp'd off their boughs, their hoar trunks bared,
And by the hatchet rudely squared,
To give the walls their destined height,
The sturdy oak and ash unite ;

While moss and clay and leaves combined
 To fence each crevice from the wind.
 The lighter pine-trees, overhead,
 Their slender length for rafters spread,
 And wither'd heath and rushes dry
 Supplied a russet canopy.
 Due westward, fronting to the green,
 A rural portico was seen,
 Aloft on native pillars borne,
 Of mountain fir with bark unshorn,
 Where Ellen's hand had taught to twine
 The ivy and Idæan vine,
 The clematis, the favour'd flower
 Which boasts the name of virgin-bower,
 And every hardy plant could bear
 Loch Katrine's keen and searching air.
 An instant in this porch she staid,
 And gaily to the stranger said,
 "On heaven and on thy lady call,
 And enter the enchanted hall!"

XXVII.

"My hope, my heaven, my trust must be,
 My gentle guide, in following thee."
 He cross'd the threshold—and a clang
 Of angry steel that instant rang.
 To his bold brow his spirit rush'd,
 But soon for vain alarm he blush'd,
 When on the floor he saw display'd,
 Cause of the din, a naked blade
 Dropp'd from the sheath, that careless flung
 Upon a stag's huge antlers swung;
 For all around the walls to grace,
 Hung trophies of the fight or chase:
 A target there, a bugle here,
 A battle-axe, a hunting spear,
 And broadswords, bows, and arrows store,
 With the tusk'd trophies of the boar.
 Here grins the wolf as when he died,
 And there the wild-cat's brindled hide
 The frontlet of the elk adorns,
 Or mantles o'er the bison's horns;
 Pennons and flags defaced and stain'd,
 That blackening streaks of blood retain'd,
 And deer-skins, dappled, dun, and white,
 With otter's fur and seal's unite,
 In rude and uncouth tapestry all,
 To garnish forth the silvan hall.

XXVIII.

The wondering stranger round him gazed,
 And next the fallen weapon raised:—
 Few were the arms whose sinewy strength
 Sufficed to stretch it forth at length,

And as the brand he poised and sway'd,
"I never knew but one," he said,
"Whose stalwart arm might brook to wield
A blade like this in battle-field."
She sigh'd, then smiled and took the word:
"You see the guardian champion's sword;
As light it trembles in his hand,
As in my grasp a hazel wand;
My sire's tall form might grace the part
Of Ferragus, or Ascabart;³
But in the absent giant's hold
Are women now, and menials old."

XXIX.

The mistress of the mansion came,
Mature of age, a graceful dame;
Whose easy step and stately port
Had well become a princely court,
To whom, though more than kindred knew,
Young Ellen gave a mother's due.
Meet welcome to her guest she made,
And every courteous rite was paid,
That hospitality could claim,
Though all unask'd his birth and name.⁹
Such then the reverence to a guest,
That fellest foe might join the feast,
And from his deadliest foeman's door
Unquestion'd turn, the banquet o'er.
At length his rank the stranger names,
"The Knight of Snowdown, James Fitz-James;
Lord of a barren heritage,
Which his brave sires, from age to age,
By their good swords had held with toil;
His sire had fall'n in such turmoil,
And he, God wot, was forced to stand
Oft for his right with blade in hand.
This morning with Lord Moray's train
He chased a stalwart stag in vain,
Outstripp'd his comrades, miss'd the deer,
Lost his good steed, and wander'd here."

XXX.

Fain would the Knight in turn require
The name and state of Ellen's sire.
Well show'd the elder lady's mien,
That courts and cities she had seen;
Ellen, though more her looks display'd
The simple grace of silvan maid,
In speech and gesture, form and face,
Show'd she was come of gentle race.
"Twere strange in ruder rank to find
Such looks, such manners, and such mind.
Each hint the Knight of Snowdown gave,
Dame Margaret heard with silence grave;

Or Ellen, innocently gay,
 Turn'd all enquiry light away :—
 "Weird women we! by dale and down
 We dwell, afar from tower and town.
 We stem the flood, we ride the blast,
 On wandering knights our spells we cast;
 While viewless minstrels touch the string,
 'Tis thus our charmed rhymes we sing."
 She sung, and still a harp unseen
 Fill'd up the symphony between.

XXXI.

Song.

"Soldier, rest! thy warfare o'er,
 Sleep the sleep that knows not breaking;
 Dream of battled fields no more,
 Days of danger, nights of waking.
 In our isle's enchanted hall,
 Hands unseen thy couch are strewing,
 Fairy strains of music fall,
 Every sense in slumber dewing.
 Soldier, rest! thy warfare o'er,
 Dream of fighting fields no more:
 Sleep the sleep that knows not breaking.
 Morn of toil, nor night of waking.

"No rude sound shall reach thine ear,
 Armour's clang, or war-steed champing,
 Trump nor pibroch summon here
 Mustering clan, or squadron tramping.
 Yet the lark's shrill fife may come
 At the day-break from the fallow,
 And the bittern sound his drum,
 Booming from the sedgy shallow.
 Ruder sounds shall none be near,
 Guards nor warders challenge here,
 Here's no war-steed's neigh and champing,
 Shouting clans or squadrons stamping."

XXXII.

She paused—then, blushing, led the lay
 To grace the stranger of the day.
 Her mellow notes awhile prolong
 The cadence of the flowing song,
 Till to her lips in measured frame
 The minstrel verse spontaneous came.

Song continued.

"Huntsman, rest! thy chase is done;
 While our slumbrous spells assail ye,
 Dream not, with the rising sun,
 Bugles here shall sound reveillé.
 Sleep! the deer is in his den;
 Sleep! thy hounds are by thee lying;

Sleep ! nor dream in yonder glen,
How thy gallant steed lay dying.
Huntsman, rest ! thy chase is done,
Think not of the rising sun,
For at dawning to assail ye,
Here no bugles sound reveillé."

XXXIII.

The hall was clear'd—the stranger's bed
Was there of mountain heather spread,
Where oft a hundred guests had lain,
And dream'd their forest sports again.
But vainly did the heath-flower shed
Its moorland fragrance round his head ;
Not Ellen's spell had lull'd to rest
The fever of his troubled breast.
In broken dreams the image rose
Of varied perils, pains, and woes :
His steed now flounders in the brake,
Now sinks his barge upon the lake ;
Now leader of a broken host,
His standard falls, his honour's lost.
Then,—from my couch may heavenly night
Chase that worst phantom of the night !—
Again return'd the scenes of youth,
Of confident undoubting truth ;
Again his soul he interchanged
With friends whose hearts were long estranged.
They come, in dim procession led,
The cold, the faithless, and the dead ;
As warm each hand, each brow as gay,
As if they parted yesterday.
And doubt distracts him at the view—
O were his senses false or true ?
Dream'd he of death, or broken vow,
Or is it all a vision now ?

XXXIV.

At length, with Ellen in a grove
He seem'd to walk, and speak of love ;
She listen'd with a blush and sigh,
His suit was warm, his hopes were high.
He sought her yielded hand to clasp,
And a cold gauntlet met his grasp :
The phantom's sex was changed and gone.
Upon its head a helmet shone ;
Slowly enlarged to giant size,
With darken'd cheek and threatening eyes,
The grisly visage, stern and hoar,
To Ellen still a likeness bore.—
He woke, and, panting with affright,
Recall'd the vision of the night.
The hearth's decaying brands were red,
And deep and dusky lustre shed,

Half showing, half concealing, all
 The uncouth trophies of the hall.
 Mid those the stranger fix'd his eye,
 Where that huge falchion hung on high,
 And thoughts on thoughts, a countless throng,
 Rush'd, chasing countless thoughts along,
 Until, the giddy whirl to cure,
 He rose, and sought the moonshine pure.

XXXV.

The wild rose, eglantine, and broom,
 Wasted around their rich perfume:
 The birch-trees wept in fragrant balm,
 The aspens slept beneath the calm;
 The silver light, with quivering glance,
 Play'd on the water's still expanse,—
 Wild were the heart whose passions' sway
 Could rage beneath the sober ray!
 He felt its calm, that warrior guest,
 While thus he communed with his breast:—
 "Why is it, at each turn I trace
 Some memory of that exiled race?
 Can I not mountain-maiden spy,
 But she must bear the Douglas eye?
 Can I not view a Highland brand,
 But it must match the Douglas hand?
 Can I not frame a fever'd dream,
 But still the Douglas is the theme?
 I'll dream no more—by manly mind
 Not even in sleep is will resign'd.
 My midnight orisons said o'er,
 I'll turn to rest, and dream no more."
 His midnight orisons he told,
 A prayer with every bead of gold,
 Consign'd to heaven his cares and woes,
 And sunk in undisturb'd repose;
 Until the heath-cock shrilly crew,
 And morning dawn'd on Benvenue.

CANTO SECOND.

The Island.

I.

At morn the black-cock trims his jetty wing,
 'Tis morning prompts the linnet's blithest lay
 All Nature's children feel the matin spring
 Of life reviving, with reviving day:

And while yon little bark glides down the bay,
Wafting the stranger on his way again,
Morn's genial influence roused a minstrel grey,
And sweetly o'er the lake was heard thy strain,
Mix'd with the sounding harp, O white hair'd Allan-Bane!¹⁴

II.

Song.

"Not faster yonder rowers' might
Flings from their oars the spray,
Not faster yonder rippling bright,
That tracks the shallop's course in light,
Melts in the lake away,
Than men from memory erase
The benefits of former days;
Then, stranger, go! good speed the while,
Nor think again of the lonely isle.

"High place to thee in roval court,
High place in battle line,
Good hawk and hound for silvan sport,
Where beauty sees the brave resort,
The honour'd meed be thine!
True be thy sword, thy friend sincere,
Thy lady constant, kind, and dear,
And lost in love and friendship's smile
Be memory of the lonely isle.

III.

Song continued.

"But if beneath yon southern sky
A plaided stranger roam,
Whose drooping crest and stifled sigh,
And sunken cheek and heavy eye,
Pine for his Highland home;
Then, warrior, then be thine to show
The care that soothes a wanderer's woe;
Remember then thy hap ere while,
A stranger in the lonely isle.

"Or if on life's uncertain main
Mishap shall mar thy sail;
If faithful, wise, and brave in vain,
Woe, want, and exile thou sustain
Beneath the fickle gale;
Waste not a sigh on fortune changed,
On thankless courts, or friends estranged,
But come where kindred worth shall smile,
To greet thee in the lonely isle."

IV.

As died the sounds upon the tide,
The shallop reach'd the mainland side,
And ere his onward way he took,
The stranger cast a lingering look,

Where easily his eye might reach
The Harper on the islet beach,
Reclined against a blighted tree,
As wasted, grey, and worn as he.
To minstrel meditation given,
His reverend brow was raised to heaven,
As from the rising sun to claim
A sparkle of inspiring flame.
His hand, reclined upon the wire,
Seem'd watching the awakening fire;
So still he sate, as those who wait
Till judgment speak the doom of fate;
So still, as if no breeze might dare
To lift one lock of hoary hair;
So still, as life itself were fled,
In the last sound his harp had sped.

V.

Upon a rock with lichens wild,
Beside him Ellen sate and smiled.—
Smiled she to see the stately drake
Lead forth his fleet upon the lake,
While her vex'd spaniel, from the beach
Bay'd at the prize beyond his reach?
Yet tell me, then, the maid who knows,
Why deepen'd on her cheek the rose?—
Forgive, forgive, Fidelity!
Perchance the maiden smiled to see
Yon parting lingerer wave adieu,
And stop and turn to wave anew;
And, lovely ladies, ere your ire
Condemn the heroine of my lyre,
Show me the fair would scorn to spy,
And prize such conquest of her eye!

VI.

While yet he loiter'd on the spot,
It seem'd as Ellen mark'd him not;
But when he turn'd him to the glade,
One courteous parting sign she made;
And after, oft the knight would say,
That not when prize of festal day
Was dealt him by the brightest fair,
Who e'er wore jewel in her hair,
So highly did his bosom swell,
As at that simple mute farewell.
Now with a trusty mountain-guide,
And his dark stag-hounds by his side,
He parts—the maid, unconscious still,
Watch'd him wind slowly round the hill;
But when his stately form was hid,
The guardian in her bosom chid—
"Thy Malcolm! vain and selfish maid!"
'Twas thus upbraiding conscience said,—

"Not so had Malcolm idly hung
 On the smooth phrase of southern tongue;
 "Not so had Malcolm strain'd his eye,
 Another step than thine to spy.—
 Wake, Allan-Bane," aloud she cried,
 To the old Minstrel by her side,—
 "Arouse thee from thy moody dream!
 I'll give thy harp heroic theme,
 And warm thee with a noble name;
 Pour forth the glory of the Græme!"¹¹
 Scarce from her lip the word had rush'd,
 When deep the conscious maiden blush'd;
 For of his clan, in hall and bower,
 Young Malcolm Græme was held the flower.

VII.

The Minstrel waked his harp—three times
 Arose the well-known martial chimes,
 And thrice their high heroic pride
 In melancholy murmurs died.
 "Vainly thou bid'st, O noble maid,"
 Clasp'ing his wither'd hands, he said,
 "Vainly thou bid'st me wake the strain,
 Though all unwont to bid in vain.
 Alas! than mine a mightier hand
 Has tuned my harp, my strings has spann'd!
 I touch the cords of joy, but low
 And mournful answer notes of woe;
 And the proud march, which victors tread,
 Sinks in the wailing for the dead.
 O well for me, if mine alone
 That dirge's deep prophetic tone!
 If, as my tuneful fathers said,
 This harp, which erst Saint Modan sway'd,¹²
 Can thus its master's fate foretell,
 Then welcome be the minstrel's knell!

VIII.

"But ah! dear lady, thus it sigh'd
 The eve thy sainted mother died;
 And such the sounds which, while I strove
 To wake a lay of war or love,
 Came marring all the festal mirth,
 Appalling me who gave them birth,
 And disobedient to my call,
 Wail'd loud through Bothwell's banner'd hall,
 Ere Douglasses, to ruin driven,¹³
 Were exiled from their native heaven.—
 Oh! if yet worse mishap and woe,
 My master's house must undergo,
 Or aught but weal to Ellen fair,
 Brood in these accents of despair,
 No future bard, sad Harp! shall fling
 Triumph or rapture from thy string:
 One short, one final strain shall flow
 Fraught with unutterable woe.

Then shiver'd shall thy fragments lie,
Thy master cast him down and die!"

IX.

Soothing she answer'd him—"Assuage,
Mine honour'd friend, the fears of age;
All melodies to thee are known,
That harp has rung, or pipe has blown,
In Lowland vale or Highland glen,
From Tweed to Spey—what marvel, then,
At times, unbidden notes should rise,
Confusedly bound in memory's ties,
Entangling, as they rush along,
The war-march with the funeral song?—
Small ground is now for boding fear;
Obscure, but safe, we rest us here.
My sire, in native virtue great,
Resigning lordship, lands, and state,
Not then to fortune more resign'd,
Than yonder oak might give the wind;
The graceful foliage storms may reave,
The noble stem they cannot grieve.
For me,"—she stoop'd, and, looking round,
Pluck'd a blue hare-bell from the ground,—
"For me, whose memory scarce conveys
An image of more splendid days,
This little flower, that loves the lea,
May well my simple emblem be;
It drinks heaven's dew as blithe as rose
That in the King's own garden grows;
And when I place it in my hair,
Allan, a bard, is bound to swear,
He ne'er saw coronet so fair."
Then playfully the chaplet wild
She wreath'd in her dark locks, and smiled.

X.

Her smile, her speech, with winning sway,
Wiled the old harper's mood away.
With such a look as hermits throw,
When angels stoop to soothe their woe,
He gazed, till fond regret and pride
Thrill'd to a tear, then thus replied:
"Loveliest and best! thou little know'st
The rank, the honours, thou hast lost!
O might I live to see thee grace,
In Scotland's court, thy birth-right place,
To see my favourite's step advance,
The lightest in the courtly dance,
The cause of every gallant's sigh,
And leading star of every eye,
And theme of every minstrel's art,
The lady of the Bleeding Heart!"—^a

^a The well-known cognizance of the Douglas family.

XI.

"Fair dreams are these," the maiden cried,
(Light was her accent, yet she sigh'd;)
"Yet is this mossy rock to me
Worth splendid chair and canopy;
Nor would my footsteps spring more gay
In courtly dance than blithe strathspey,
Nor half so pleased mine ear incline
To royal minstrel's lay as thine.
And then for suitors proud and high,
To bend before my conquering eye,—
Thou, flattering bard! thyself wilt say,
That grim Sir Roderick owns its sway.
The Saxon scourge, Clan-Alpine's pride,
The terror of Loch-Lomond's side,
Would, at my suit, thou know'st, delay
A Lennox foray—for a day."—

XII.

The ancient bard his glee repress'd:
"Ill hast thou chosen theme for jest!
For who, through all this western wild,
Named Black Sir Roderick e'er, and smiled!
In Holy-Rood a knight he slew;¹⁴
I saw, when back the dirk he drew,
Courtiers give place before the stride
Of the undaunted homicide;
And since, though outlaw'd, hath his hand
Full sternly kept his mountain land.
Who else dared give—ah! woe the day,
That I such hated truth should say—
The Douglas, like a stricken deer,
Disown'd by every noble peer,¹⁵
Even the rude refuge we have here!
Alas, this wild marauding Chief
Alone might hazard our relief,
And now thy maiden charms expand,
Looks for his guerdon in thy hand;
Full soon may dispensation sought,
To back his suit, from Rome be brought.
Then, though an exile on the hill,
Thy father, as the Douglas, still
Be held in reverence and fear;
And though to Roderick thou'rt so dear,
That thou might'st guide with silken thread,
Slave of thy will, this chieftain dread;
Yet, O loved maid, thy mirth refrain!
Thy hand is on a lion's mane."—

XIII.

"Minstrel," the maid replied, and high
Her father's soul glanced from her eye,
"My debts to Roderick's house I know:
All that a mother could bestow,
To Lady Margaret's care I owe,

Since first an orphan in the wild
 She sorrow'd o'er her sister's child;
 To her brave chieftain son, from ire
 Of Scotland's king who shrouds my sire,
 A deeper, holier debt is owed;
 And, could I pay it with my blood,
 Allan! Sir Roderick should command
 My blood, my life,—but not my hand.
 Rather will Ellen Douglas dwell
 A votaress in Maronnan's cell;¹⁶
 Rather through realms beyond the sea,
 Seeking the world's cold charity,
 Where ne'er was spoke a Scottish word,
 And ne'er the name of Douglas heard,
 An outcast pilgrim will she rove,
 Than wed the man she cannot love.

XIV.

"Thou shakest, good friend, thy tresses gay,—
 That pleading look, what can it say
 But what I own?—I grant him brave,
 But wild as Bracklinn's thundering wave;¹⁷
 And generous—save vindictive mood,
 Or jealous transport, chafe his blood:
 I grant him true to friendly band,
 As his claymore is to his hand;
 But O! that very blade of steel
 More mercy for a foe would feel:
 I grant him liberal, to fling
 Among his clan the wealth they bring,
 When back by lake and glen they wind,
 And in the Lowland leave behind,
 Where once some pleasant hamlet stood,
 A mass of ashes slaked with blood.
 The hand that for my father fought,
 I honour, as his daughter ought;
 But can I clasp it reeking red,
 From peasants slaughter'd in their shed?
 No! wildly while his virtues gleam,
 They make his passions darker seem,
 And flash along his spirit high,
 Like lightning o'er the midnight sky.
 While yet a child,—and children know,
 Instinctive taught, the friend and foe,—
 I shudder'd at his brow of gloom,
 His shadowy plaid, and sable plume;
 A maiden grown, I ill could bear
 His haughty mien and lordly air:
 But, if thou join'st a suitor's claim,
 In serious mood, to Roderick's name,
 I thrill with anguish! or, if e'er
 A Douglas knew the word, with fear.
 To change such odious theme were best,—
 What think'st thou of our stranger guest?"—

XV.

"What think I of him?—woe the while
 That brought such wanderer to our isle!
 Thy father's battle-brand, of yore
 For Time-man forged by fairy lore,¹⁸
 What time he leagued, no longer foes,
 His Border spears with Hotspur's bows,
 Did, self-unscaubarded, foreshow
 The footstep of a secret foe.¹⁹
 If courtly spy hath harbour'd here,
 What may we for the Douglas fear?
 What for this island, deem'd of old
 Clan-Alpine's last and surest hold?
 If neither spy nor foe, I pray
 What yet may jealous Roderick say?
 —Nay, wave not thy disdainful head,
 Bethink thee of the discord dread,
 That kindled when at Beltane game
 Thou ledst the dance with Malcolm Græme;
 Still, though thy sire the peace renew'd,
 Smoulders in Roderick's breast the feud.
 Beware!—But hark, what sounds are these?
 My dull ears catch no faltering breeze,
 No weeping birch, nor aspens wake,
 Nor breath is dimpling in the lake,
 Still is the canna's^a hoary beard,
 Yet, by my minstrel faith, I heard—
 And hark again! some pipe of war
 Sends the bold pibroch from afar."

XVI.

Far up the lengthen'd lake were spied
 Four darkening specks upon the tide,
 That, slow enlarging on the view,
 Four mann'd and masted barges grew,
 And, bearing downwards from Glengyle,
 Steer'd full upon the lonely isle;
 The point of Brianchoil they pass'd,
 And, to the windward as they cast,
 Against the sun they gave to shine
 The bold Sir Roderick's banner'd Pine.
 Nearer and nearer as they bear,
 Spear, pikes, and axes flash in air.
 Now might you see the tartans brave,
 And plaids and plumage dance and wave:
 Now see the bonnets sink and rise,
 As his tough oar the rower plies;
 See, flashing at each sturdy stroke,
 The wave ascending into smoke;
 See the proud pipers on the bow,
 And mark the gaudy streamers flow
 From their loud chanters' down, and sweep
 The furrow'd bosom of the deep,

^a The cotton-grass.^b The pipe of the bagpipe.

As, rushing through the lake amain,
They plied the ancient Highland strain.

XVII.

Ever, as on they bore, more loud
And louder rung the pibroch proud.
At first the sound, by distance tame,
Mellow'd along the waters came,
And, lingering long by cape and bay,
Wail'd every harsher note away;
Then bursting bolder on the ear,
The clan's shrill Gathering they could hear;
Those thrilling sounds, that call the might
Of Old Clan-Alpine to the fight.²⁰
Thick beat the rapid notes, as when
The mustering hundreds shake the glen,
And, hurrying at the signal dread,
The batter'd earth returns their tread.
Then prelude light, of livelier tone,
Express'd their merry marching on,
Ere peal of closing battle rose,
With mingled outcry, shrieks, and blows,
And mimic din of stroke and ward,
As broadsword upon target jarr'd;
And groaning pause, ere yet again
Condensed, the battle yell'd amain;
The rapid charge, the rallying shout,
Retreat borne headlong into rout.
And bursts of triumph, to declare
Clan-Alpine's conquest—all were there.
Nor ended thus the strain; but slow
Sunk in a moan prolong'd and low,
And changed the conquering clarion swell,
For wild lament o'er those that fell.

XVIII.

The war-pipes ceased; but lake and hill
Were busy with their echoes still;
And, when they slept, a vocal strain
Bade their hoarse chorus wake again,
While loud a hundred clansmen raise
Their voices in their Chieftain's praise.
Each boatman, bending to his oar,
With measured sweep the burden bore,
In such wild cadence, as the breeze
Makes through December's leafless trees.
The chorus first could Allan know,
"Roderick Vich Alpine, ho! iro!"
And near, and nearer as they row'd,
Distinct the martial ditty flow'd.

XIX.

Boat Song.

Hail to the Chief who in triumph advances!
Honour'd and bless'd be the ever-green line!

Long may the tree, in his banner that glances,
 Flourish, the shelter and grace of our line:
 Heaven send it happy dew,
 Earth lend it sap anew,
 Gayly to bourgeon, and broadly to grow.
 While every Highland glen
 Sends our shout back agen,
 "Roderigh Vich Alpine dhu, ho! ieroe!"²¹

Ours is no sapling, chance-sown by the fountain,
 Blooming at Beltane, in winter to fade;
 When the whirlwind has stripp'd every leaf on the mountain
 The more shall Clan-Alpine exult in her shade.
 Moor'd in the rifted rock,
 Proof to the tempest's shock,
 Firmer he roots him the ruder it blow;
 Menteith and Breadalbane, then,
 Echo his praise agen,
 "Roderigh Vich Alpine dhu, ho! ieroe!"

XX.

Proudly our pibroch has thrill'd in Glen Fruin,
 And Bannochar's groans to our slogan replied;
 Glen Luss and Ross-dhu, they are smoking in ruin,
 And the best of Loch-Lomond lie dead on her side.
 Widow and Saxon maid
 Long shall lament our raid,
 Think of Clan-Alpine with fear and with woe;
 Lennox and Leven-glen
 Shake when they hear agen,
 "Roderigh Vich Alpine dhu, ho! ieroe!"

Row, vassals, row, for the pride of the Highlands!
 Stretch to your oars, for the ever-green Pine!
 O that the rose-bud that graces yon islands,
 Were wreathed in a garland around him to twine!
 O that some seedling gem,
 Worthy such noble stem,
 Honour'd and bless'd in their shadow might grow!
 Loud should Clan-Alpine then
 Ring from the deepest glen,
 "Roderigh Vich Alpine dhu, ho! ieroe!"

XXI.

With all her joyful female band,
 Had Lady Margaret sought the strand.
 Loose on the breeze their tresses flew,
 And high their snowy arms they threw,
 As echoing back with shrill acclaim,
 And chorus wild, the Chieftain's name;
 While, prompt to please, with mother's art,
 The darling passion of his heart,

^a Black Roderick, the descendant of Alpine.

The Dame called Ellen to the strand,
 To greet her kinsman ere he land:
 "Come, loiterer, come! a Douglas thou,
 And shun to wreathe a victor's brow?"—
 Reluctantly and slow, the maid
 The unwelcome summoning obey'd,
 And, when a distant bugle rung,
 In the mid-path aside she sprung:—
 "List, Allan-Bane! From mainland cast
 I hear my father's signal blast.
 Be ours," she cried, "the skiff to guide,
 And waft him from the mountain-side."
 Then, like a sunbeam, swift and bright,
 She darted to her shallop light,
 And, eagerly while Roderick scann'd,
 For her dear form, his mother's band,
 The islet far behind her lay,
 And she had landed in the bay.

XXII.

Some feelings are to mortals given,
 With less of earth in them than heaven;
 And if there be a human tear
 From passion's dross refined and clear,
 A tear so limpid and so meek,
 It would not stain an angel's cheek,
 'Tis that which pious fathers shed
 Upon a duteous daughter's head!
 And as the Douglas to his breast
 His darling Ellen closely press'd,
 Such holy drops her tresses steep'd,
 Though 't was a hero's eye that weep'd.
 Nor while on Ellen's faltering tongue
 Her filial welcomes crowded hung,
 Mark'd she, that fear (affection's proof)
 Still held a graceful youth aloof;
 No! not till Douglas named his name,
 Although the youth was Malcolm Græma.

XXIII.

Allan, with wistful look the while,
 Mark'd Roderick landing on the isle;
 His master piteously he eyed,
 Then gazed upon the Chieftain's pride,
 Then dash'd, with hasty hand, away
 From his dimm'd eye the gathering spray;
 And Douglas, as his hand he laid
 On Malcolm's shoulder, kindly said,
 "Canst thou, young friend, no meaning spy
 In my poor follower's glistening eye?
 I'll tell thee:—he recalls the day
 When in my praise he led the lay
 O'er the arch'd gate of Bothwell proud,
 While many a minstrel answer'd loud

When Percy's Norman pennon, won
In bloody field, before me shone,
And twice ten knights, the least a name
As mighty as yon Chief may claim,
Gracing my pomp, behind me came.
Yet trust me, Malcolm, not so proud
Was I of all that marshall'd crowd,
Though the waned crescent own'd my might,
And in my train troop'd lord and knight,
Though Blantyre hymn'd her holiest lays,
And Bothwell's bards flung back my praise,
As when this old man's silent tear,
And this poor maid's affection dear,
A welcome give more kind and true,
Than aught my better fortunes knew.
Forgive, my friend, a father's boast,
O! it out-beggars all I lost!"

XXIV.

Delightful praise!—like summer rose,
That brighter in the dew-drop glows,
The bashful maiden's cheek appear'd,
For Douglas spoke, and Malcolm heard.
The flush of shame-faced joy to hide,
The hounds, the hawk, her cares divide;
The loved caresses of the maid
The dogs with crouch and whimper paid;
And, at her whistle, on her hand
The falcon took his favourite stand,
Closed his dark wing, relax'd his eye,
Nor, though unhooded, sought to fly.
And, trust, while in such guise she stood,
Like fabled Goddess of the wood,
That if a father's partial thought
O'erweigh'd her worth, and beauty aught,
Well might the lover's judgment fail
To balance with a juster scale;
For with each secret glance he stole,
The fond enthusiast sent his soul.

XXV.

Of stature tall, and slender frame,
But firmly knit, was Malcolm Græme.
The belted plaid and tartan hose
Did ne'er more graceful limbs disclose;
His flaxen hair, of sunny hue,
Curl'd closely round his bonnet blue.
Train'd to the chase, his eagle eye
The ptarmigan in snow could spy:
Each pass, by mountain, lake, and heath,
He knew, through Lennox and Menteith:
Vain was the bound of dark-brown doe,
When Malcolm bent his sounding bow;
And scarce that doe, though wing'd with fear,
Outstripp'd in speed the mountaineer:

Right up Ben-Lomond could he press,
And not a sob his toil confess.
His form accorded with a mind
Lively and ardent, frank and kind.
A blither heart, till Ellen came,
Did never love nor sorrow tame;
It danced as lightsome in his breast,
As play'd the feather on his crest.
Yet friends, who nearest knew the youth,
His scorn of wrong, his zeal for truth,
And bards, who saw his features bold,
When kindled by the tales of old,
Said, were that youth to manhood grown,
Not long should Roderick Dhu's renown
Be foremost voiced by mountain fame,
But quail to that of Malcolm Græme.

XXVI.

Now back they wend their watery way,
And, "O my sire!" did Ellen say,
"Why urge thy chase so far astray?
And why so late return'd?—And why"—
The rest was in her speaking eye.—
"My child, the chase I follow far,
'Tis mimicry of noble war;
And with that gallant pastime reft
Were all of Douglas I have left.
I met young Malcolm as I stray'd
Far eastward, in Glenfinlas' shade,
Nor stray'd I safe; for, all around,
Hunters and horsemen scour'd the ground.
This youth, though still a royal ward,
Risk'd life and land to be my guard,
And through the passes of the wood
Guided my steps, not unpursued;
And Roderick shall his welcome make,
Despite old spleen, for Douglas' sake.
Then must he seek Strath-Endrick glen,
Nor peril aught for me agen."

XXVII.

Sir Roderick, who to meet them came,
Redden'd at sight of Malcolm Græme,
Yet, not in action, word, or eye,
Fail'd aught in hospitality.
In talk and sport they whiled away
The morning of that summer day;
But at high noon a courier light
Held secret parley with the knight,
Whose moody aspect soon declared,
That evil were the news he heard.
Deep thought seem'd toiling in his head;
Yet was the evening banquet made,
Ere he assembled round the flame,
His mother, Douglas, and the Græme,

And Helen, too; then cast around
His eyes, then fix'd them on the ground,
As studying phrase that might avail
Best to convey unpleasant tale.
Long with his dagger's hilt he play'd,
Then raised his haughty brow, and said :—

XXVIII.

" Short be my speech ;—nor time affords,
Nor my plain temper, glozing words.
Kinsman and father,—if such name
Douglas vouchsafe to Roderick's claim ;
Mine honour'd mother :—Ellen—why,
My cousin, turn away thine eye ?—
And Græme ; in whom I hope to know
Full soon a noble friend or foe,
When age shall give thee thy command,
And leading in thy native land,—
List all !—The King's vindictive pride
Boasts to have tamed the Border-side,
Where chiefs, with hound and hawk who came
To share their monarch's silvan game,
Themselves in bloody toils were snared ;
And when the banquet they prepared,
And wide their loyal portals flung,
O'er their own gateway struggling hung.
Loud cries their blood from Meggat's mead,
From Yarrow braes, and banks of Tweed,
Where the lone streams of Ettrick glide,
And from the silver Teviot's side ;
The dales, where martial clans did ride,
Are now one sheep-walk, waste and wide.
This tyrant of the Scottish throne,
So faithless, and so ruthless known,
Now hither comes ; his end the same,
The same pretext of silvan game.
What grace for Highland Chiefs, judge ye
By fate of Border chivalry.
Yet more ; amid Glenfinlas green,
Douglas, thy stately form was seen—
This by espial sure I know :
Your counsel in the streight I show ? "

XXIX.

Ellen and Margaret fearfully
Sought comfort in each other's eye,
Then turn'd their ghastly look, each one,
This to her sire—that to her son.
The hasty colour went and came
In the bold cheek of Malcolm Græme ;
But from his glance it well appear'd,
"T was but for Ellen that he fear'd ;
While, sorrowful, but undismay'd,
The Douglas thus his counsel said :—

"Brave Roderick, though the tempest roar,
It may but thunder, and pass o'er;
Nor will I here remain an hour,
To draw the lightning on thy bower;
For well thou know'st, at this grey head
The royal bolt were fiercest sped.
For thee, who, at thy King's command,
Canst aid him with a gallant band,
Submission, homage, humbled pride,
Shall turn the monarch's wrath aside.
Poor remnants of the Bleeding Heart,
Ellen and I will seek, apart,
The refuge of some forest cell,
There, like the hunted quarry, dwell,
Till on the mountain and the moor,
The stern pursuit be pass'd and o'er."

XXX.

"No, by mine honour," Roderick said,
"So help me, Heaven, and my good blade!
No, never! Blasted be yon Pine,
My father's ancient crest and mine,
If from its shade in danger part
The lineage of the Bleeding Heart!
Hear my blunt speech: grant me this maid
To wife, thy counsel to mine aid;
To Douglas, leagued with Roderick Dhu,
Will friends and allies flock enow;
Like cause of doubt, distrust, and grief,
Will bind to us each Western Chief.
When the loud pipes my bridal tell,
The Links of Forth shall hear the knell,
The guards shall start in Stirling's porch;
And, when I light the nuptial torch,
A thousand villages in flames
Shall scare the slumbers of King James!
—Nay, Ellen, blench not thus away,
And, mother, cease these signs, I pray;
I meant not all my heart might say.
Small need of inroad, or of fight,
When the sage Douglas may unite
Each mountain clan in friendly band,
To guard the passes of their land,
Till the foil'd king, from pathless glen,
Shall bootless turn him home agen."

XXXI.

There are who have, at midnight hour,
In slumber scaled a dizzy tower,
And, on the verge that beetled o'er
The ocean tide's incessant roar,
Dream'd calmly out their dangerous dream,
Till waken'd by the morning beam;
When, dazzled by the eastern glow,
Such startler cast his glance below,

And saw unmeasured depth around,
And heard unintermitted sound,
And thought the battled fence so frail,
It waved like cobweb in the gale;—
Amid his senses' giddy wheel,
Did he not desperate impulse feel,
Headlong to plunge himself below,
And meet the worst his fears foreshow?—
Thus, Ellen, dizzy and astound,
As sudden ruin yawn'd around,
By crossing terrors wildly toss'd,
Still for the Douglas fearing most,
Could scarce the desperate thought withstand,
To buy his safety with her hand.

XXXII.

Such purpose dread could Malcolm spy
In Ellen's quivering lip and eye,
And eager rose to speak—but ere
His tongue could hurry forth his fear,
Had Douglas mark'd the hectic strife,
Where death seem'd combating with life;
For to her cheek, in feverish flood,
One instant rush'd the throbbing blood,
Then ebbing back, with sudden sway,
Left its domain as wan as clay.
“Roderick, enough! enough!” he cried,
“My daughter cannot be thy bride;
Not that the blush to wooer dear,
Nor paleness that of maiden fear.
It may not be—forgive her, Chief,
Nor hazard aught for our relief.
Against his sovereign, Douglas ne'er
Will level a rebellious spear.
’Twas I that taught his youthful hand
To rein a steed and wield a brand;
I see him yet, the princely boy!
Not Ellen more my pride and joy;
I love him still, despite my wrongs,
By hasty wrath, and slanderous tongues.
O seek the grace you well may find,
Without a cause to mine combined.”

XXXIII.

Twice through the hall the Chieftain strode;
The waving of his tartans broad,
And darken'd brow, where wounded pride
With ire and disappointment vied,
Seem'd, by the torch's gloomy light,
Like the ill Demon of the night,
Stooping his pinions' shadowy sway
Upon the nighted pilgrim's way:
But, unrequited Love! thy dart
Plunged deepest its envenom'd smart,

And Roderick, with thine anguish stung,
At length the hand of Douglas wrung,
While eyes, that mock'd at tears before,
With bitter drops were running o'er.
The death-pangs of long-cherish'd hope
Scarce in that ample breast had scope,
But, struggling with his spirit proud,
Convulsive heaved its chequer'd shroud,
While every sob—so mute were all—
Was heard distinctly through the hall.
The son's despair, the mother's look,
Ill might the gentle Ellen brook;
She rose, and to her side there came,
To aid her parting steps, the Græme.

XXXIV.

Then Roderick from the Douglas broke—
As flashes flame through sable smoke,
Kindling its wreaths, long, dark, and low,
To one broad blaze of ruddy glow,
So the deep anguish of despair
Burst, in fierce jealousy, to air.
With stalwart grasp his hand he laid
On Malcolm's breast and belted plaid:
"Back, beardless boy!" he sternly said,
"Back, minion! hold'st thou thus at nought
The lesson I so lately taught?
This roof, the Douglas, and that maid,
Thank thou for punishment delay'd."
Eager as greyhound on his game,
Fiercely with Roderick grappled Græme.
"Perish my name, if aught afford
Its Chieftain safety save his sword!"
Thus as they strove, their desperate hand
Griped to the dagger or the brand,
And death had been—but Douglas rose,
And thrust between the struggling foes
His giant strength:—"Chieftains, forego!
I hold the first who strikes, my foe.—
Madmen, forbear your frantic jar!
What! is the Douglas fall'n so far,
His daughter's hand is doom'd the spoil
Of such dishonourable broil!"
Sullen and slowly, they unclasp,
As struck with shame, their desperate grasp,
And each upon his rival glared,
With foot advanced, and blade half bared.

XXXV.

Ere yet the brands aloft were flung,
Margaret on Roderick's mantle hung,
And Malcolm heard his Ellen's scream,
As falter'd through terrific dream.
Then Roderick plunged in sheath his sword,
And veil'd his wrath in scornful word:

"Rest safe till morning; pity 't were
 Such cheek should feel the midnight air!
 Then mayest thou to James Stuart tell,
 Roderick will keep the lake and fell,
 Nor lackey, with his freeborn clan,
 The pageant pomp of earthly man.
 More would he of Clan-Alpine know,
 Thou canst our strength and passes show.—
 Malise, what ho!"—his henchman came;
 "Give our safe-conduct to the Græme."
 Young Malcolm answer'd, calm and bold,
 "Fear nothing for thy favourite hold;
 The spot an angel deign'd to grace,
 Is bless'd, though robbers haunt the place.
 Thy churlish courtesy for those
 Reserve, who fear to be thy foes.
 As safe to me the mountain way
 At midnight as in blaze of day,
 Though with his boldest at his back,
 Even Roderick Dhu beset the track.—
 Brave Douglas,—lovely Ellen,—nay,
 Nought here of parting will I say.
 Earth does not hold a lonesome glen
 So secret, but we meet agen.—
 Chieftain! we too shall find an hour,"—
 He said, and left the silvan bower.

XXXVI.

Old Allan follow'd to the strand,
 (Such was the Douglas's command,)
 And anxious told, how, on the morn,
 The stern Sir Roderick deep had sworn,
 The Fiery Cross should circle o'er
 Dale, glen, and valley, down, and moor.
 Much were the peril to the Græme,
 From those who to the signal came;
 Far up the lake 't were safest land,
 Himself would row him to the strand.
 He gave his counsel to the wind,
 While Malcolm did, unheeding, bind,
 Round dirk and pouch and broadsword roll'd.
 His ample plaid in tighten'd fold,
 And stripp'd his limbs to such array,
 As best might suit the watery way,—

XXXVII.

Then spoke abrupt: "Farewell to thee,
 Pattern of old fidelity!"
 The Minstrel's hand he kindly press'd,—
 O! could I point a place of rest!
 My sovereign holds in ward my land,
 My uncle leads my vassal band;
 To tame his foes, his friends to aid,
 Poor Malcolm has but heart and blade.

Yet, if there be one faithful Græme,
 Who loves the chieftain of his name,
 Not long shall honour'd Douglas dwell,
 Like hunted stag, in mountain cell;
 Nor, ere yon pride-swoll'n robber dare,—
 I may not give the rest to air!
 Tell Roderick Dhu, I owed him nought,
 Not the poor service of a boat,
 To waft me to yon mountain-side.”
 Then plunged he in the flashing tide.
 Bold o'er the flood his head he bore,
 And stoutly steer'd him from the shore;
 And Allan strain'd his anxious eye,
 Far 'mid the lake his form to spy.
 Darkening across each puny wave,
 To which the moon her silver gave,
 Fast as the cormorant could skim,
 The swimmer plied each active limb;
 Then landing in the moonlight dell,
 Loud shouted of his weal to tell.
 The Minstrel heard the far halloo,
 And joyful from the shore withdrew.

CANTO THIRD.

The Gathering.

I.

TIME rolls his ceaseless course. The race of yore,
 Who danced our infancy upon their knee,
 And told our marvelling boyhood legends store,
 Of their strange ventures happ'd by land or sea,
 How are they blotted from the things that be!
 How few, all weak and wither'd of their force,
 Wait on the verge of dark eternity,
 Like stranded wrecks, the tide returning hoarse,
 To sweep them from our sight! Time rolls his ceaseless course.

Yet live there still who can remember well,
 How, when a mountain chief his bugle blew,
 Both field and forest, dingle, cliff, and dell,
 And solitary heath, the signal knew;
 And fast the faithful clan around him drew,
 What time the warning note was keenly wound,
 What time aloft their kindred banner flew,
 While clamorous war-pipes yell'd the gathering sound,
 And while the Fiery Cross glanced, like a meteor, round.²²

II.

The summer dawn's reflected hue
To purple changed Loch Katrine blue;
Mildly and soft the western breeze
Just kiss'd the lake, just stirr'd the trees;
And the pleased lake, like maiden coy,
Trembled but dimpled not for joy;
The mountain-shadows on her breast
Were neither broken nor at rest;
In bright uncertainty they lie,
Like future joys to Fancy's eye.
The water-lily to the light
Her chalice rear'd of silver bright;
The doe awoke, and to the lawn,
Begemm'd with dewdrops, led her fawn;
The grey mist left the mountain side,
The torrent show'd its glistening pride;
Invisible in flecked sky,
The lark sent down her revelry;
The blackbird and the speckled thrush
Good-morrow gave from brake and bush;
In answer coo'd the cushat dove
Her notes of peace, and rest, and love.

III.

No thought of peace, no thought of rest,
Assuaged the storm in Roderick's breast.
With sheathed broadsword in his hand,
Abrupt he paced the islet strand,
And eyed the rising sun, and laid
His hand on his impatient blade.
Beneath a rock, his vassals' care
Was prompt the ritual to prepare,
With deep and deathful meaning fraught
For such Antiquity had taught
Was preface meet, ere yet abroad
The Cross of Fire should take its road.
The shrinking band stood oft aghast
At the impatient glance he cast;—
Such glance the mountain eagle threw,
As, from the cliffs of Benvenue,
She spread her dark sails on the wind,
And, high in middle heav'n reclined,
With her broad shadow on the lake,
Silenced the warblers of the brake.

IV.

A heap of wither'd boughs was piled,
Of juniper and rowan wild,
Mingled with shivers from the oak,
Rent by the lightning's recent stroke.
Brian, the Hermit, by it stood,
Barefooted, in his frock and hood.
His grisled beard and matted hair
Obscured a visage of despair;

His naked arms and legs, seam'd o'er,
 The scars of frantic penance bore.
 That monk, of savage form and face,²³
 The impending danger of his race
 Had drawn from deepest solitude,
 Far in Benharrow's bosom rude.
 Not his the mien of Christian priest,
 But Druid's, from the grave released,
 Whose harden'd heart and eye might brock
 On human sacrifice to look;
 And much, 't was said, of heathen lore
 Mix'd in the charms he mutter'd o'er.
 The hallow'd creed gave only worse
 And deadlier emphasis of curse;
 No peasant sought that Hermit's prayer,
 His cave the pilgrim shunn'd with care,
 The eager huntsman knew his bound,
 And in mid chase call'd off his hound;
 Or if, in lonely glen or strath,
 The desert-dweller met his path,
 He pray'd, and sign'd the cross between,
 While terror took devotion's mien.

V.

Of Brian's birth strange tales were told.²⁴
 His mother watch'd a midnight fold,
 Built deep within a dreary glen,
 Where scatter'd lay the bones of men,
 In some forgotten battle slain,
 And bleach'd by drifting wind and rain.
 It might have tamed a warrior's heart,
 To view such mockery of his art!
 The knot-grass fetter'd there the hand,
 Which once could burst an iron band;
 Beneath the broad and ample bone,
 That buckler'd heart to fear unknown,
 A feeble and a timorous guest,
 The field-fare framed her lowly nest;
 There the slow blind-worm left his slime
 On the fleet limbs that mock'd at time;
 And there, too, lay the leader's skull,
 Still wreath'd with chaplet, flush'd and full,
 For heath-bell with her purple bloom,
 Supplied the bonnet and the plume.
 All night, in this sad glen, the maid
 Sate, shrouded in her mantle's shade:
 —She said, no shepherd sought her side,
 No hunter's hand her snood untied,
 Yet ne'er again, to braid her hair,
 The virgin snood did Alice wear;²⁵
 Gone was her maiden glee and sport,
 Her maiden girdle all too short;
 Nor sought she, from that fatal night,
 Or holy church, or blessed rite,

But lock'd her secret in her breast,
And died in travail, unconfess'd

VI.

Alone, among his young compeers,
Was Brian from his infant years;
A moody and heart-broken boy,
Estranged from sympathy and joy,
Bearing each taunt which careless tongue
On his mysterious lineage flung.
Whole nights he spent by moonlight pale,
To wood and stream his hap to wail,
Till, frantic, he as truth received
What of his birth the crowd believed,
And sought, in mist and meteor fire,
To meet and know his Phantom Sire!
In vain, to soothe his wayward fate,
The cloister oped her pitying gate;
In vain, the learning of the age
Unclasp'd the sable-letter'd page;
Even in its treasures he could find
Food for the fever of his mind.
Eager he read whatever tells
Of magic, cabala, and spells,
And every dark pursuit allied
To curious and presumptuous pride;
Till, with fired brain and nerves o'erstrung,
And heart with mystic horrors wrung,
Desperate he sought Benharrow's den,
And hid him from the haunts of men.

VII.

The desert gave him visions wild,
Such as might suit the spectre's child.
Where with black cliffs the torrents toil,
He watch'd the wheeling eddies boil,
Till, from their foam, his dazzled eyes
Beheld the River Demon rise;
The mountain mist took form and limb,
Of noontide hag, or goblin grim;
The midnight wind came wild and dread,
Swell'd with the voices of the dead;
Far on the future battle-heath
His eye beheld the ranks of death:
Thus the lone Seer, from mankind hurl'd,
Shaped forth a disembodied world.
One lingering sympathy of mind
Still bound him to the mortal kind;
The only parent he could claim
Of ancient Alpine's lineage came.
Late had he heard, in prophet's dream,
The fatal Ben-Shie's boding scream;²⁶
Sounds, too, had come in midnight blast,
Of charging steeds, careering fast

Along Benharrow's shingly side,
 Where mortal horsemen ne'er might ride ;²⁷
 The thunderbolt had split the pine,—
 All augur'd ill to Alpine's line.
 He girt his loins, and came to show
 The signals of impending woe,
 And now stood prompt to bless or ban,
 As bade the Chieftain of his clan.

VIII.

'T was all prepared ;—and from the rock,
 A goat, the patriarch of the flock,
 Before the kindling pile was laid,
 And pierced by Roderick's ready blade.
 Patient the sickening victim eyed
 The life-blood ebb in crimson tide,
 Down his clogg'd beard and shaggy limb,
 Till darkness glazed his eyeballs dim.
 The grisly priest, with murmuring prayer,
 A slender crosslet form'd with care,
 A cubit's length in measure due ;
 The shaft and limbs were rods of yew,
 Whose parents in Inch-Cailliach wave
 Their shadows o'er Clan Alpine's grave,
 And, answering Lomond's breezes deep,
 Soothe many a chieftain's endless sleep.
 The Cross, thus form'd, he held on high,
 With wasted hand, and haggard eye,
 And strange and mingled feelings woke,
 While his anathema he spoke :

IX.

"Woe to the clansman, who shall view
 This symbol of sepulchral yew,
 Forgetful that its branches grew
 Where weep the heavens their holiest dew
 On Alpine's dwelling low !
 Deserter of his Chieftain's trust,
 He ne'er shall mingle with their dust,
 But, from his sires and kindred thrust,
 Each clansman's execration just
 Shall doom him wrath and woe."
 He paused ;—the word the vassals took,
 With forward step and fiery look,
 On high their naked brands they shook,
 Their clattering targets wildly strook ;
 And first in murmur low,
 Then, like the billow in his course,
 That far to seaward finds his source
 And flings to shore his muster'd force,
 Burst, with loud roar, their answer hourse,
 "Woe to the traitor, woe !"
 Ben-an's grey scalp the accents knew,
 The joyous wolf from covert drew,

The exulting eagle scream'd afar,—
They knew the voice of Alpine's war.

X.

The shout was hush'd on lake and fell,
The Monk resumed his mutter'd spell :
Dismal and low its accents came,
The while he scathed the Cross with flame ;
And the few words that reach'd the air,
Although the holiest name was there,
Had more of blasphemy than prayer.
But when he shook above the crowd
Its kindled points, he spoke aloud :—
" Woe to the wretch who fails to rear
At this dread sign the ready spear !
For, as the flames this symbol sear,
His home the refuge of his fear,
A kindred fate shall know ;
Far o'er its roof the volumed flame
Clan-Alpine's vengeance shall proclaim,
While maids and matrons on his name
Shall call down wretchedness and shame,
And infamy and woe."
Then rose the cry of females, shrill
As goss-hawk's whistle on the hill,
Denouncing misery and ill,
Mingled with childhood's babbling trill
Of curses stammer'd slow ;
Answering, with imprecation dread,
" Sunk be his home in embers red !
And cursed be the meanest shed
That e'er shall hide the houseless head,
We doom to want and woe !"
A sharp and shrieking echo gave,
Coir-Uriskin, thy goblin cave !
And the grey pass where birches wave,
On Beala-nam-bo.

XI.

Then deeper paused the priest anew,
And hard his labouring breath he drew.
While, with set teeth and clenched hand,
And eyes that glow'd like fiery brand,
He meditated curse more dread,
And deadlier, on the clansman's head,
Who, summon'd to his chieftain's aid,
The signal saw and disobey'd.
The crosslet's points of sparkling wood,
He quenched among the bubbling blood,
And, as again the sign he rear'd,
Hollow and hoarse his voice was heard :
" When flits this Cross from man to man,
Vich-Alpine's summons to his clan,
Burst be the ear that fails to heed !
Palsied the foot that shuns to speed !

May ravens tear the careless eyes,
 Wolves make the coward heart their prize!
 As sinks that blood-stream in the earth,
 So may his heart's-blood drench his hearth!
 As dies in hissing gore the spark,
 Quench thou his light, Destruction dark,
 And be the grace to him denied,
 Bought by this sign to all beside!"
 He ceased; no echo gave agen
 The murmur of the deep Amen.

XII.

Then Roderick, with impatient look,
 From Brian's hand the symbol took:
 "Speed, Malise, speed!" he said, and gave
 The crosslet to his henchman brave.
 "The muster-place be Lanrick mead—
 Instant the time—speed, Malise, speed!"
 Like heath-bird, when the hawks pursue,
 A barge across Loch Katrine flew;
 High stood the henchman on the prow;
 So rapidly the barge-men row,
 The bubbles, where they launch'd the boat,
 Were all unbroken and afloat,
 Dancing in foam and ripple still,
 When it had near'd the mainland hill;
 And from the silver beach's side
 Still was the prow three fathom wide,
 When lightly bounded to the land
 The messenger of blood and brand.

XIII.

Speed, Malise, speed! the dun deer's hide
 On fleeter foot was never tied.²⁸
 Speed, Malise, speed! such cause of haste
 Thine active sinews never braced.
 Bend 'gainst the steepy hill thy breast,
 Burst down like torrent from its crest;
 With short and springing footstep pass
 The trembling bog and false morass;
 Across the brook like roebuck bound,
 And thread the brake like questing hound;
 The crag is high, the scaur is deep,
 Yet shrink not from the desperate leap:
 Parch'd are thy burning lips and brow,
 Yet by the fountain pause not now;
 Herald of battle, fate, and fear,
 Stretch onward in thy fleet career!
 The wounded hind thou track'st not now,
 Pursuest not maid through greenwood bough,
 Nor pliest thou now thy flying pace,
 With rivals in the mountain race;
 But danger, death, and warrior deed,
 Are in thy course—speed, Malise, speed!

XIV.

Fast as the fatal symbol flies,
 In arms the huts and hamlets rise;
 From winding glen, from upland brown,
 They pour'd each hardy tenant down.
 Nor slack'd the messenger his pace;
 He show'd the sign, he named the place,
 And, pressing forward like the wind,
 Left clamour and surprise behind.
 The fisherman forsook the strand,
 The swarthy smith took dirk and brand
 With changed cheer, the mower blithe
 Left in the half-cut swathe the scythe;
 The herds without a keeper stray'd,
 The plough was in mid-furrow staid,
 The falc'ner toss'd his hawk away,
 The hunter left the stag at bay;
 Prompt at the signal of alarms,
 Each son of Alpine rush'd to arms;
 So swept the tumult and affray
 Along the margin of Achray.
 Alas, thou lovely lake! that e'er
 Thy banks should echo sounds of fear!
 The rocks, the bosky thickets, sleep
 So stilly on thy bosom deep,
 The lark's blithe carol, from the cloud,
 Seems for the scene too gaily loud.

XV.

Speed, Malise, speed!—The lake is past,
 Duncraggan's huts appear at last,
 And peep, like moss-grown rocks, half-s
 Half hidden in the copse so green;
 There mayst thou rest, thy labour done,
 Their Lord shall speed the signal on.—
 As stoops the hawk upon his prey,
 The henchman shot him down the way.
 —What woeful accents load the gale?
 The funeral yell, the female wail!
 A gallant hunter's sport is o'er,
 A valiant warrior fights no more.
 Who, in the battle or the chase,
 At Roderick's side shall fill his place!—
 Within the hall, where torches' ray
 Supplies the excluded beams of day,
 Lies Duncan on his lowly bier,
 And o'er him streams his widow's tear.
 His stripling son stands mournful by
 His youngest weeps, but knows not why;
 The village maids and matrons round
 The dismal coronach resound.²⁹

XVI.

Coronach.

He is gone on the mountain,
 He is lost to the forest,
 Like a summer-dried fountain,
 When our need was the sorest.
 The font reappearing,
 From the rain-drops shall borrow,
 But to us comes no cheering,
 To Duncan no morrow!
 The hand of the reaper
 Takes the ears that are hoary,
 But the voice of the weeper
 Wails manhood in glory.
 The autumn winds rushing
 Waft the leaves that are searest,
 But our flower was in flushing,
 When blighting was nearest.

Fleet foot on the corrie,^a
 Sage counsel in cumber,
 Red hand in the foray,
 How sound is thy slumber!
 Like the dew on the mountain,
 Like the foam on the river,
 Like the bubble on the fountain,
 Thou art gone, and for ever!

XVII.

See Stumah,^b who, the bier beside,
 His master's corpse with wonder eyed,
 Poor Stumah! whom his least haloo
 Could send like lightning o'er the dew,
 Bristles his crest, and points his ears,
 As if some stranger step he hears.
 'Tis not a mourner's muffled tread,
 Who comes to sorrow o'er the dead,
 But headlong haste, or deadly fear,
 Urge the precipitate career.
 All stand aghast:—unheeding all,
 The henchman bursts into the hall;
 Before the dead man's bier he stood;
 Held forth the cross besmear'd with blood--
 "The muster-place is Lanrick mead--
 Speed forth the signal! clansmen, speed!"

XVIII.

Angus, the heir of Duncan's line,
 Sprung forth and seized the fatal sign.
 In haste the stripling to his side
 His father's dirk and broadsword tied;

^a Or *corri*, the hollow side of the hill, where game usually lies.

^b *Faithful*, the name of a dog.

But when he saw his mother's eye
Watch him in speechless agony,
Back to her open'd arms he flew,
Press'd on her lips a fond adieu—
"Alas!" she sobb'd,—“and yet, be gone,
And speed thee forth, like Duncan's son!”
One look he cast upon the bier,
Dash'd from his eye the gathering tear,
Breathed deep to clear his labouring breast,
And toss'd aloft his bonnet crest,
Then, like the high-bred colt, when, freed,
First he essays his fire and speed,
He vanish'd, and o'er moor and moss
Sped forward with the Fiery Cross.
Suspended was the widow's tear,
While yet his footsteps she could here;
And when she mark'd the henchman's eye
Wet with unwonted sympathy,
Kinsman,” she said, “his race is run,
That should have sped thine errand on;
The oak has fall'n,—the sapling bough
Is all Duncraggan's shelter now.
Yet trust I well, his duty done,
The orphan's God will guard my son.—
And you, in many a danger true,
At Duncan's hest your blades that drew,
To arms, and guard that orphan's head!
Let babes and women wail the dead.”
Then weapon-clang, and martial call,
Resounded through the funeral hall,
While from the walls the attendant band
Snatch'd sword and targe, with hurried hand
And short and flitting energy
Glanced from the mourner's sunken eye,
As if the sounds to warrior dear,
Might rouse her Duncan from his bier.
But faded soon that borrow'd force;
Grief claim'd his right, and tears their course.

XIX.

Benledi saw the Cross of Fire,
It glanced like lightning up Strath-Ire.
O'er dale and hill the summons flew,
Nor rest nor pause young Angus knew;
The tear that gather'd in his eye
He left the mountain-breeze to dry;
Until, where Teith's young waters roll,
Betwixt him and a wooded knoll,
That graced the sable strath with green,
The chapel of Saint Bride was seen.
Swoln was the stream, remote the bridge,
But Angus paused not on the edge;
Though the dark waves danced dizzily,
Though reel'd his sympathetic eye,

He dash'd amid the torrent's roar:
 His right hand high the crosslet bore,
 His left the pole-axe grasp'd, to guide
 And stay his footing in the tide.
 He stumbled twice—the foam splash'd high,
 With hoarser swell the stream raced by;
 And had he fall'n,—for ever there,
 Farewell Duncraggan's orphan heir!
 But still, as if in parting life,
 Firmer he grasp'd the Cross of strife,
 Until the opposing bank he gain'd,
 And up the chapel pathway strained.

XX.

A blithesome rout, that morning tide,
 Had sought the chapel of St Bride.
 Her troth Tombea's Mary gave
 To Norman, heir of Armandave.
 And, issuing from the Gothic arch,
 The bridal now resumed their march.
 In rude, but glad procession, came
 Bonneted sire and coif-clad dame;
 And plaided youth, with jest and jeer,
 Which snooded maiden would not hear;
 And children, that, unwitting why,
 Lent the gay shout their shrilly cry;
 And minstrels, that in measures vied
 Before the young and bonny bride,
 Whose downcast eye and cheek disclose
 The tear and blush of morning rose.
 With virgin step, and bashful hand,
 She held the 'kerchief's snowy band;
 The gallant bridegroom by her side,
 Beheld his prize with victor's pride,
 And the glad mother in her ear
 Was closely whispering word of cheer.

XXI.

Who meets them at the churchyard gate?
 The messenger of fear and fate!
 Haste in his hurried accent lies,
 And grief is swimming in his eyes.
 All dripping from the recent flood,
 Panting and travel-soil'd he stood,
 The fatal sign of fire and sword
 Held forth, and spoke the appointed word:
 "The muster-place is Lanrick mead—
 Speed forth the signal! Norman, speed!"
 And must he change so soon the hand,
 Just link'd to his by holy band,
 For the fell Cross of blood and brand?
 And must the day, so blithe that rose,
 And promised rapture in the close,
 Before its setting hour, divide
 The bridegroom from the plighted bride?

O fatal doom!—it must! it must!
 Clan-Alpine's cause, her Chieftain's trust,
 Her summons dread, brook no delay;
 Stretch to the race—away! away!

XXII.

Yet slow he laid his plaid aside,
 And, lingering, eyed his lovely bride,
 Until he saw the starting tear
 Speak woe he might not stop to cheer;
 Then, trusting not a second look,
 In haste he sped him up the brook,
 Nor backward glanced, till on the heath
 Where Lubnag's lade supplies the Teith.
 —What in the racer's bosom stirr'd?
 The sickening pang of hope deferr'd,
 And memory, with a torturing train
 Of all his morning visions vain.
 Mingled with love's impatience, came
 The manly thirst for martial fame;
 The stormy joy of mountaineers,
 Ere yet they rush upon the spears;
 And zeal for Clan and Chieftain burning,
 And hope, from well-fought field returning,
 With war's red honours on his crest,
 To clasp his Mary to his breast.
 Stung by such thoughts, o'er bank and brae,
 Like fire from flint he glanced away,
 While high resolve, and feeling strong,
 Burst into voluntary song.

XXIII.

Song.

The heath this night must be my bed,
 The bracken^a curtain for my head,
 My lullaby the warder's tread,
 Far, far, from love and thee, Mary;
 To-morrow eve, more stilly laid,
 My couch may be my bloody plaid,
 My vesper song thy wail, sweet maid!
 It will not waken me, Mary!

I may not, dare not, fancy now
 The grief that clouds thy lovely brow;
 I dare not think upon thy vow,
 And all it promised me, Mary!
 No fond regret must Norman know;
 When bursts Clan-Alpine on the foe,
 His heart must be like bended bow,
 His foot like arrow free, Mary.

A time will come with feeling fraught,
 For, if I fall in battle fought,

^a *Bracken*, fern

Thy hapless lover's dying thought
 Shall be a thought on thee, Mary.
 And if return'd from conquer'd foes,
 How blithely will the evening close,
 How sweet the linnet sing repose,
 To my young bride and me, Mary!

XXIV.

Not faster o'er thy heathery braces,
 Balquhiddy, speeds the midnight blaze,²⁰
 Rushing, in conflagration strong,
 Thy deep ravines and dells along,
 Wrapping thy cliffs in purple glow,
 And reddening the dark lakes below;
 Nor faster speeds it, nor so far,
 As o'er thy heaths the voice of war.
 The signal roused to martial coil
 The sullen margin of Loch Voil,
 Waked still Loch Doine, and to the source
 Alarm'd, Balvaig, thy swampy course;
 Thence southward turn'd its rapid road
 Adown Strath-Gartney's valley broad,
 Till rose in arms each man might claim
 A portion in Clan-Alpine's name,
 From the grey sire, whose trembling hand
 Could hardly buckle on his brand,
 To the raw boy, whose shaft and bow
 Were yet scarce terror to the crow.
 Each valley, each sequester'd glen,
 Muster'd its little horde of men,
 That met as torrents from the height
 In Highland dales their streams unite,
 Still gathering, as they pour along,
 A voice more loud, a tide more strong,
 Till at the rendezvous they stood
 By hundreds prompt for blows and blood.
 Each train'd to arms since life began,
 Owning no tie but to his clan,
 No oath, but by his chieftain's hand,
 No law, but Roderick Dhu's command.

XXV.

That summer morn had Roderick Dhu
 Survey'd the skirts of Benvenue,
 And sent his scouts o'er hill and heath,
 To view the frontiers of Menteith.
 All backward came with news of truce;
 Still lay each martial Græme and Bruce,
 In Rednock courts no horseman wait,
 No banner waved on Cardross gate,
 On Duchray's towers no beacon shone,
 Nor scared the herons from Loch Con;
 All seem'd at peace.—Now wot ye why
 The Chieftain, with such anxious eye,
 Ere to the muster he repair,
 This western frontier scann'd with care?—

In Benvenue's most darksome cleft,
A fair, though cruel, pledge was left;
For Douglas, to his promise true,
That morning from the isle withdrew,
And in a deep sequester'd dell
Had sought a low and lonely cell.
By many a bard, in Celtic tongue,
Has Coir-nan-Uriskin been sung;³¹
A softer name the Saxons gave,
And called the grot the Goblin-cave.

XXVI.

It was a wild and strange retreat,
As e'er was trod by outlaw's feet.
The dell, upon the mountain's crest,
Yawn'd like a gash on warrior's breast;
Its trench had staid full many a rock,
Hurl'd by primeval earthquake shock
From Benvenue's grey summit wild,
And here, in random ruin piled,
They frown'd incumbent o'er the spot,
And form'd the rugged silvan grot.
The oak and birch, with mingled shade,
At noontide there a twilight made,
Unless when short and sudden shone
Some straggling beam on cliff or stone,
With such a glimpse as prophet's eye
Gains on thy depth, Futurity.
No murmur waked the solemn still,
Save tinkling of a fountain rill;
But when the wind chafed with the lake,
A sullen sound would upward break,
With dashing hollow voice, that spoke
The incessant war of wave and rock.
Suspended cliffs, with hideous sway,
Seem'd nodding o'er the cavern grey.
From such a den the wolf had sprung.
In such the wild-cat leaves her young;
Yet Douglas and his daughter fair
Sought for a space their safety there.
Grey Superstition's whisper dread
Debarr'd the spot to vulgar tread;
For there, she said, did fays resort,
And satyrs hold their silvan court,
By moonlight tread their mystic maze,
And blast the rash beholder's gaze.

XXVII.

Now eve, with western shadows long,
Floated on Katrine bright and strong,
When Roderick, with a chosen few,
Repass'd the heights of Benvenue.
Above the Goblin-cave they go,
Through the wild pass of Beal-nam-bo:

The prompt retainers speed before,
 To launch the shallop from the shore,
 For cross Loch Katrine lies his way
 To view the passes of Achray,
 And place his clansmen in array.
 Yet lags the chief in musing mind,
 Unwonted sight, his men behind.
 A single page, to bear his sword,
 Alone attended on his lord;
 The rest their way through thickets break,
 And soon await him by the lake.
 It was a fair and gallant sight,
 To view them from the neighbouring height,
 By the low-levell'd sunbeam's light!
 For strength and stature, from the clan
 Each warrior was a chosen man,
 As even afar might well be seen,
 By their proud step and martial mien.
 Their feathers dance, their tartans float,
 Their targets gleam, as by the boat
 A wild and warlike group they stand,
 That well became such mountain-strand.

XXVIII.

Their Chief, with step reluctant, still
 Was lingering on the craggy hill,
 Hard by where turn'd apart the road
 To Douglas's obscure abode.
 It was but with that dawning morn,
 That Roderick Dhu had proudly sworn
 To drown his love in war's wild roar,
 Nor think of Ellen Douglas more;
 But he who stems a stream with sand,
 And fetters flame with flaxen band,
 Has yet a harder task to prove—
 By firm resolve to conquer love!
 Eve finds the Chief, like restless ghost,
 Still hovering near his treasure lost;
 For though his haughty heart deny
 A parting meeting to his eye,
 Still fondly strains his anxious ear,
 The accents of her voice to hear,
 And inly did he curse the breeze
 That waked to sound the rustling trees.
 But hark! what mingles in the strain?
 It is the harp of Allan-Bane,
 That wakes its measure slow and high,
 Attuned to sacred minstrelsy.
 What melting voice attends the strings?
 'Tis Ellen, or an angel, sings.

XXIX.

Hymn to the Virgin.

Ave Maria! maiden mild!
 Listen to a maiden's prayer!

Thou canst hear though from the wild,
 Thou canst save amid despair.
 Safe may we sleep beneath thy care,
 Though banish'd, outcast, and reviled—
 Maiden! hear a maiden's prayer!
 Mother, hear a suppliant child!

Ave Maria!

Ave Maria! undefiled!
 The flinty couch we now must share
 Shall seem with down of eider piled,
 If thy protection hover there.
 The murky cavern's heavy air
 Shall breathe of balm if thou hast smiled;
 Then, Maiden! hear a maiden's prayer!
 Mother, list a suppliant child!

Ave Maria!

Ave Maria! Stainless styled!
 Foul demons of the earth and air,
 From this their wonted haunt exiled,
 Shall flee before thy presence fair.
 We bow us to our lot of care,
 Beneath thy guidance reconciled;
 Hear for a maid a maiden's prayer!
 And for a father hear a child!

Ave Maria!

XXX.

Died on the harp the closing hymn—
 Unmoved in attitude and limb,
 As listening still, Clan-Alpine's lord
 Stood leaning on his heavy sword,
 Until the page, with humble sign,
 Twice pointed to the sun's decline.
 Then while his plaid he round him cast,
 It is the last time—'tis the last,"
 He mutter'd thrice,—“the last time e'er
 That angel-voice shall Roderick hear!”
 It was a goading thought—his stride
 Hied hastier down the mountain-side;
 Sullen he flung him in the boat,
 And instant 'cross the lake it shot.
 They landed in that silvery bay,
 And eastward held their hasty way,
 Till, with the latest beams of light,
 The band arrived on Lanrick height,
 Where muster'd, in the vale below,
 Clan-Alpine's men in martial show.

XXXI.

A various scene the clansmen made;
 Some sate, some stood, some slowly stray'd;
 But most, with mantles folded round,
 Were couch'd to rest upon the ground,

Scarce to be known by curious eye,
 From the deep heather where they lie,
 So well was match'd the tartan screen
 With heath-bell dark and brackens green;
 Unless where, here and there, a blade,
 Or lance's point, a gummer made,
 Like glow-worm twinkling through the shada.
 But when, advancing through the gloom,
 They saw the Chieftain's eagle plume,
 Their shout of welcome, shrill and wide,
 Shook the steep mountain's steady side.
 Thrice it arose, and lake and fell
 Three times return'd the martial yell :
 It died upon Bochart's plain
 And Silence claim'd her evening reign.

CANTO FOURTH.

The Prophecy.

I.

"THE rose is fairest when 'tis budding new,
 And hope is brightest when it dawns from fears;
 The rose is sweetest wash'd with morning dew.
 And love is loveliest when embalm'd in tears.
 O wilding rose, whom fancy thus endears,
 I bid your blossoms in my bonnet wave,
 Emblem of hope and love through future years!"—
 Thus spoke young Norman, heir of Armandave,
 What time the sun arose on Vennachar's broad wave.

II.

Such fond conceit, half said half sung,
 Love prompted to the bridegroom's tongue.
 All while he stripp'd the wild-rose spray,
 His axe and bow beside him lay,
 For on a pass 'twixt lake and wood,
 A wakeful sentinel he stood.
 Hark! on the rock a footstep rung,
 And instant to his arms he sprung.
 "Stand, or thou diest!—What, Malise?—soon
 Art thou return'd from Braes of Doune.
 By thy keen step and glance I know,
 Thou bring'st us tidings of the foe."—
 (For while the Fiery Cross hied on,
 On distant scout had Malise gone.)
 "Where sleeps the Chief?" the henchman said.—

"Apart, in yonder misty glade;
 To his lone couch I'll be your guide."—
 Then call'd a slumberer by his side,
 And stirr'd him with his slacken'd bow—
 "Up, up, Glentarkin! rouse thee, ho!
 We seek the Chieftain; on the track,
 Keep eagle watch till I come back."

III.

Together up the pass they sped:
 "What of the foeman?" Norman said.—
 "Varying reports from near and far;
 This certain,—that a band of war
 Has for two days been ready boune,
 At prompt command, to march from Dorne;
 King James, the while, with princely powers,
 Holds revelry in Stirling towers.
 Soon will this dark and gathering cloud
 Speak on our glens in thunder loud.
 Inured to bide such bitter bout,
 The warrior's plaid may bear it out;
 But, Norman, how wilt thou provide
 A shelter for thy bonny bride?"—
 "What! know ye not that Roderick's care
 To the lone isle hath caused repair
 Each maid and matron of the clan,
 And every child and aged man
 Unfit for arms; and given his charge,
 Nor skiff nor shallop, boat nor barge,
 Upon these lakes shall float at large,
 But all beside the islet moor,
 That such dear pledge may rest secure?"—

IV.

"T is well advised—the Chieftain's plan
 Bespeaks the father of his clan.
 But wherefore sleeps Sir Roderick Dhu
 Apart from all his followers true?"—
 "It is, because last evening-tide
 Brian an augury hath tried,
 Of that dread kind which must not be
 Unless in dread extremity,
 The Taghairm call'd; by which, afar,
 Our sires foresaw the events of war;³¹
 Duncraggan's milk-white bull they slew."

MALISE.

"Ah! well the gallant brute I knew!
 The choicest of the prey we had,
 When swept our merry-men Gallangad.
 His hide was snow, his horns were dark,
 His red eye glow'd like fiery spark;
 So fierce, so tameless, and so fleet,
 Sore did he cumber our retreat,

And kept our stoutest kernes in awe,
 Even at the pass of Beal 'maha.
 But steep and flinty was the road,
 And sharp the hurrying pikemen's goad,
 And when we came to Dennan's Row,
 A child might scatheless stroke his brow."

V.

NORMAN.

"That bull was slain: his reeking hide
 They stretch'd the cataract beside,
 Whose waters their wild tumult toss
 Adown the black and craggy boss
 Of that huge cliff, whose ample verge
 Tradition calls the Hero's Targe.³³
 Couch'd on a shelf beneath its brink,
 Close where the thundering torrents sink,
 Rocking beneath their headlong sway,
 And drizzled by the ceaseless spray,
 Midst groan of rock, and roar of stream,
 The wizard waits prophetic dream.
 Nor distant rests the Chief;—but hush!
 See, gliding slow through mist and bush,
 The hermit gains yon rock, and stands
 To gaze upon our slumbering bands.
 Seems he not, Malise, like a ghost,
 That hovers o'er a slaughter'd host?
 Or raven on the blasted oak,
 That, watching while the deer is broke,^a
 His morsel claims with sullen croak?"

MALISE.

—"Peace! peace! to other than to me,
 Thy words were evil augury;
 But still I hold Sir Roderick's blade
 Clan-Alpine's omen and her aid,
 Not aught that, glean'd from heaven or hell,
 Yon fiend-begotten Monk can tell.
 The Chieftain joins him, see—and now,
 Together they descend the brow."

VI.

And, as they came, with Alpine's Lord
 The Hermit Monk held solemn word:—
 "Roderick! it is a fearful strife,
 For man endow'd with mortal life,
 Whose shroud of sentient clay can still
 Feel feverish pang and fainting chill,
 Whose eye can stare in stony trance,
 Whose hair can rouse like warrior's lance,—
 'Tis hard for such to view, unfurl'd,
 The curtain of the future world.

^a Quartered.

Yet, witness every quaking limb,
 My sunken pulse, my eyeballs dim,
 My soul with harrowing anguish torn,—
 This for my Chieftain have I borne!—
 The shapes that sought my fearful couch,
 A human tongue may ne'er avouch;
 No mortal man,—save he, who, bred
 Between the living and the dead,
 Is gifted beyond nature's law.—
 Had e'er survived to say he saw.
 At length the fatal answer came,
 In characters of living flame!
 Not spoke in word, nor blazed in scroll,
 But borne and branded on my soul;—
 WHICH SPILLS THE FOREMOST FOEMAN'S LIFE,
 THAT PARTY CONQUERS IN THE STRIFE."—³⁴

VII.

"Thanks, Brian, for thy zeal and care!
 Good is thine augury, and fair.
 Clan-Alpine ne'er in battle stood,
 But first our broadswords tasted blood.
 A surer victim still I know,
 Self-offer'd to the auspicious blow:
 A spy has sought my land this morn,—
 No eve shall witness his return!
 My followers guard each pass' mouth,
 To east, to westward, and to south;
 Red Murdoch, bribed to be his guide,
 Has charge to lead his steps aside,
 Till, in deep path or dingle brown,
 He light on those shall bring him down.
 —But see, who comes his news to show!
 Malise! what tidings of the foe?"—

VIII.

'At Doune, o'er many a spear and glaive
 Two Barons proud their banners wave.
 I saw the Moray's silver star,
 And mark'd the sable pale of Mar."—
 "By Alpine's soul, high tidings those!
 I love to hear of worthy foes.
 When move they on?"—"To-morrow's noon.
 Will see them here for battle boun."—^a
 "Then shall it see a meeting stern!—
 But, for the place—say, couldst thou learn
 Nought of the friendly clans of Earn?
 Strengthened by them, we well might bide
 The battle on Benledi's side.
 Thou couldst not?—well! Clan Alpine's men
 Shall man the Trosachs' shaggy glen;
 Within Loch Katrine's gorge we'll fight,
 All in our maids' and matrons' sight,

^a For battle boun—ready for battle.

Each for his hearth and household fire,
Father for child, and son for sire,—
Lover for maid beloved !—But why—
Is it the breeze affects mine eye ?
Or dost thou come, ill-omened tear !
A messenger of doubt or fear ?
No ! sooner may the Saxon lance
Unfix Benledi from his stance,
Than doubt or terror can pierce through
The unyielding heart of Roderick Dhu :
'Tis stubborn as his trusty targe.—
Each to his post—all know their charge.”
The pibroch sounds, the bands advance,
The broadswords gleam, the banners dance
Obedient to the Chieftain's glance.
—I turn me from the martial roar,
And seek Coir-Uriskin once more.

IX.

Where is the Douglas ?—he is gone ;
And Ellen sits on the grey stone
Fast by the cave, and makes her moan ;
While vainly Allan's words of cheer
Are pour'd on her unheeding ear.—
He will return—Dear lady, trust !—
With joy return ;—he will—he must.
Well was it time to seek, afar,
Some refuge from impending war,
When e'en Clan-Alpine's rugged swarm
Are cow'd by the approaching storm.
I saw their boats, with many a light,
Floating the livelong yesternight,
Shifting like flashes darted forth
By the red streamers of the north ;
I mark'd at morn how close they ride,
Thick moor'd by the lone islet's side,
Like wild ducks couching in the fen,
When stoops the hawk upon the glen.
Since this rude race dare not abide
The peril on the mainland side,
Shall not thy noble father's care
Some safe retreat for thee prepare ?”—

X.

ELLEN.

“No, Allan, no ! Pretext so kind
My wakeful terrors could not blind.
When in such tender tone, yet grave,
Douglas a parting blessing gave,
The tear that glisten'd in his eye
Drown'd not his purpose fix'd on high.
My soul, though feminine and weak,
Can image his ; e'en as the lake,
Itself disturb'd by slightest stroke,
Reflects the invulnerable rock.

He hears report of battle rife,
 He deems himself the cause of strife.
 I saw him redden, when the theme
 Turn'd, Allan, on thine idle dream
 Of Malcolm Græme in fetters bound,
 Which I, thou saidst, about him wound.
 Thinkst thou he trow'd thine omen aught?
 Oh no! 't was apprehensive thought
 For the kind youth,—for Roderick too—
 (Let me be just) that friend so true;
 In danger both, and in our cause!
 Minstrel, the Douglas dare not pause.
 Why else that solemn warning given,
 'If not on earth, we meet in heaven?'
 Why else, to Cambus-kenneth's fane,
 If e'er return him not again,
 Am I to hie, and make me known?
 Alas! he goes to Scotland's throne,
 Buys his friend's safety with his own;—
 He goes to do—what I had done,
 Had Douglas' daughter been his son!"—

XI.

"Nay, lovely Ellen!—dearest, nay!
 If aught should his return delay,
 He only named yon holy fane
 As fitting place to meet again.
 Be sure he's safe; and for the Græme,—
 Heaven's blessing on his gallant name!—
 My vision'd sight may yet prove true,
 Nor bode of ill to him or you.
 When did my gifted dream beguile?
 Think of the stranger at the isle,
 And think upon the harpings slow,
 That presaged this approaching woe!
 Sooth was my prophecy of fear;
 Believe it when it augurs cheer.
 Would we had left this dismal spot!
 Ill luck still haunts a fairy grot.
 Of such a wonderous tale I know—
 Dear lady, change that look of woe,
 My harp was wont thy grief to cheer."—

ELLEN.

"Well, be it as thou wilt; I hear,
 But cannot stop the bursting tear."
 The Minstrel tried his simple art,
 But distant far was Ellen's heart.

XII.

BALLAD.

ALICE BRAND.

Merry it is in the good greenwood,
 When the mavis^a and merle^b are singing,

^a Thrush.^b Blackbird.

When the deer sweeps by, and the hounds are in cry,
And the hunter's horn is ringing.

"O Alice Brand, my native land
Is lost for love of you;
And we must hold by wood and wold,
As outlaws wont to do.

"O Alice, 'twas all for thy locks so bright,
And 'twas all for thine eyes so blue,
That on the night of our luckless flight,
Thy brother bold I slew.

"Now must I teach to hew the beech
The hand that held the glaive,
For leaves to spread our lowly bed,
And stakes to fence our cave.

"And for vest of pall, thy fingers small,
That wont on harp to stray,
A cloak must sheer from the slaughter'd deer,
To keep the cold away."—

"O Richard! if my brother died,
'T was but a fatal chance;
For darkling was the battle tried,
And fortune sped the lance."

"If pall and vair no more I wear,
Nor thou the crimson sheen,
As warm, we'll say, is the russet grey,
As gay the forest-green.

"And, Richard, if our lot be hard,
And lost thy native land,
Still Alice has her own Richard,
And he his Alice Brand."

XIII.

Ballad continued.

'Tis merry, 'tis merry, in good greenwood,
So blithe Lady Alice is singing;
On the beech's pride, and oak's brown side,
Lord Richard's axe is ringing.

Up spoke the moody Elfin King,
Who won'd within the hill,—
Like wind in the porch of a ruin'd church,
His voice was ghostly shrill.

"Why sounds yon stroke on beach and oak,
Our moonlight circle's screen?
Or who comes here to chase the deer,
Beloved of our Elfin Queen?³⁵
Or who may dare on wold to wear
The fairies' fatal green!³⁶

"Up, Urgan, up! to yon mortal hie,
 For thou wert christen'd man;³⁷
 For cross or sign thou wilt not fly,
 For mutter'd word or ban.

"Lay on him the curse of the wither'd heart,
 The curse of the sleepless eye;
 Till he wish and pray that his life would part,
 Nor yet find leave to die."

XIV.

Ballad continued.

"T is merry, 'tis merry, in good greenwood,
 Though the birds have still'd their singing!
 The evening blaze doth Alice raise,
 And Richard is fagots bringing.

Up Urgan starts, that hideous dwarf,
 Before Lord Richard stands,
 And, as he cross'd and bless'd himself,
 "I fear not sign," quoth the grisly elf,
 "That is made with bloody hands."

But out then spoke she, Alice Brand,
 That woman void of fear,—
 "And if there's blood upon his hand,
 'T is but the blood of deer."—

"Now loud thou liest, thou bold of mood!
 It cleaves unto his hand,
 The stain of thine own kindly blood,
 The blood of Ethert Brand."

Then forward stepp'd she, Alice Brand,
 And made the holy sign,—
 "And if there's blood on Richard's hand,
 A spotless hand is mine.

"And I conjure thee, Demon elf,
 By him whom Demons fear,
 To show us whence thou art thyself,
 And what thine errand here?"

XV.

Ballad continued.

"T is merry, 'tis merry, in Fairy-land,
 When fairy birds are singing,
 When the court doth ride by their monarch's side,
 With bit and bridle ringing:

"And gaily shines the Fairy-land—
 But all is glistening show,
 Like the idle gleam that December's beam
 Can dart on ice and snow.

"And fading, like that varied gleam,
Is our inconstant shape,
Who now like knight and lady seem,
And now like dwarf and ape.

"It was between the night and day,
When the Fairy King has power,
That I sunk down in a sinful fray,
And, 'twixt life and death, was snatched away
To the joyless Elfin bower.

"But wist I of a woman bold,
Who thrice my brow durst sign,
I might regain my mortal mold,
As fair a form as thine."

She cross'd him once—she cross'd him twice—
That lady was so brave;
The fouler grew his goblin hue,
The darker grew the cave.

She cross'd him thrice, that lady bold;
He rose beneath her hand
The fairest knight on Scottish mold,
Her brother, Ethert Brand!

Merry it is in good greenwood,
When the mavis and merle are singing,
But merrier were they in Dunfermline grey,
When all the bells were ringing.

XVI.

Just as the minstrel sounds were staid,
A stranger climb'd the steepy glade;
His martial step, his stately mien,
His hunting suit of Lincoln green,
His eagle glance, remembrance claims—
'Tis Snowdoun's Knight, 'tis James Fitz-James,
Ellen beheld as in a dream,
Then, starting, scarce suppress'd a scream:
"O stranger! in such hour of fear,
What evil hap has brought thee here?"—
"An evil hap how can it be,
That bids me look again on thee?
By promise bound, my former guide
Met me betimes this morning tide,
And marshall'd, over bank and bourne,
The happy path of my return."—
"The happy path!—what! said he nought
Of war, of battle to be fought,
Of guarded pass?"—"No, by my faith!
Nor saw I aught could augur scathe."—
"O haste thee, Allan, to the kern,
—Yonder his tartans I discern;

Learn thou his purpose, and conjure
That he will guide the stranger sure!—
What prompted thee, unhappy man?
The meanest serf in Roderick's clan
Had not been bribed by love or fear,
Unknown to him to guide thee here.”—

XVII.

“ Sweet Ellen, dear my life must be,
Since it is worthy care from thee;
Yet life I hold but idle breath,
When love or honour's weigh'd with death.
Then let me profit by my chance,
And speak my purpose bold at once.
I come to bear thee from a wild,
Where ne'er before such blossom smiled;
By this soft hand to lead thee far
From frantic scenes of feud and war.
Near Bochastle my horses wait;
They bear us soon to Stirling gate.
I'll place thee in a lovely bower,
I'll guard thee like a tender flower”
“ O! hush, Sir Knight! 'twere female art,
To say I do not read thy heart;
Too much, before, my selfish ear
Was idly soothed my praise to hear.
That fatal bait hath lured thee back,
In deathful hour, o'er dangerous track;
And how, O how, can I atone
The wreck my vanity brought on!—
One way remains—I'll tell him all—
Yes! struggling bosom, forth it shall!
Thou, whose light folly bears the blame,
Buy thine own pardon with thy shame!
But first—my father is a man
Outlaw'd and exiled, under ban;
The price of blood is on his head,
With me 'twere infamy to wed.—
Still would'st thou speak?—then hear the truth!
Fitz-James, there is a noble youth,—
If yet he is!—exposed for me
And mine to dread extremity—
Thou hast the secret of my heart;
Forgive, be generous, and depart!”

XVIII.

Fitz-James knew every wily train
A lady's fickle heart to gain;
But here he knew and felt them vain.
There shot no glance from Ellen's eye,
To give her steadfast speech the lie;
In maiden confidence she stood,
Though mantled in her cheek the blood,
And told her love with such a sigh
Of deep and hopeless agony,

As death had seal'd her Malcolm's doom,
 And she sat sorrowing on his tomb.
 Hope vanish'd from Fitz-James's eye,
 But not with hope fled sympathy.
 He proffer'd to attend her side,
 As brother would a sister guide.—
 "O! little know'st thou Roderick's heart!
 Safer for both we go apart.
 O haste thee, and from Allan learn,
 If thou mayst trust yon wily kern."
 With hand upon his forehead laid,
 The conflict of his mind to shade,
 A parting step or two he made;
 Then, as some thought had cross'd his brain,
 He paus'd, and turn'd, and came again.

XIX.

"Hear, lady, yet, a parting word!—
 It chanced in fight that my poor sword
 Preserved the life of Scotland's lord.
 This ring the grateful Monarch gave,
 And bade, when I had boon to crave,
 To bring it back, and boldly claim
 The recompense that I would name.
 Ellen, I am no courtly lord,
 But one who lives by lance and sword,
 Whose castle is his helm and shield,
 His lordship the embattled field.
 What from a prince can I demand,
 Who neither reck of state nor land?
 Ellen, thy hand—the ring is thine;
 Each guard and usher knows the sign.
 Seek thou the King without delay;
 This signet shall secure thy way;
 And claim thy suit, whate'er it be,
 As ransom of his pledge to me."
 He placed the golden circlet on,
 Paus'd—kiss'd her hand—and then was gone.
 The aged Minstrel stood aghast,
 So hastily Fitz-James shot past.
 He join'd his guide, and wending down
 The ridges of the mountain brown,
 Across the stream they took their way,
 That joins Loch Katrine to Achray.

XX.

All in the Trosachs' glen was still,
 Noontide was sleeping on the hill:
 Sudden his guide whoop'd loud and high—
 "Murdoch! was that a signal cry?"—
 He stammer'd forth—"I shout to scare
 Yon raven from his dainty fare."
 He look'd—he knew the raven's prey
 His own brave steed:—"Ah! gallant grey!

For thee—for me, perchance—'t were well
 We ne'er had seen the Trosachs' dell.—
 Murdoch, move first—but silently;
 Whistle or whoop, and thou shalt die!"
 Jealous and sullen, on they fared,
 Each silent, each upon his guard.

XXI.

Now wound the path its dizzy ledge
 Around a precipice's edge,
 When lo! a wasted female form,
 Blighted by wrath of sun and storm,
 In tatter'd weeds and wild array,
 Stood on a cliff beside the way,
 And glancing round her restless eye,
 Upon the wood, the rock, the sky,
 Seem'd nought to mark, yet all to spy.
 Her brow was wreath'd with gaudy broom;
 With gesture wild she waved a plume
 Of feathers, which the eagles fling
 To crag and cliff from dusky wing;
 Such spoils her desperate step had sought,
 Where scarce was footing for the go
 The tartan plaid she first descried,
 And shriek'd till all the rocks replied;
 As loud she laugh'd when near they drew,
 For then the Lowland garb she knew;
 And then her hands she wildly wrung,
 And then she wept, and then she sung—
 She sung!—the voice, in better time,
 Perchance to harp or lute might chime;
 And now, though strain'd and roughen'd, still
 Rung wildly sweet to dale and hill.

XXII.

Sung.

They bid me sleep, they bid me pray,
 They say my brain is warp'd and rung—
 I cannot sleep on Highland brae,
 I cannot pray in Highland tongue.
 But were I now where Allan glides,
 Or heard my native Devan's tides,
 So sweetly would I rest, and pray
 That Heaven would close my wintry day:
 'Twas thus my hair they bade me braid,
 They made me to the church repair;
 It was my bridal morn, they said,
 And my true love would meet me there.
 But woe betide the cruel guile,
 That drown'd in blood the morning smile
 And woe betide the fairy dream!
 I only waked to sob and scream.

XXIII.

"Who is this maid? what means her lay?
She hovers o'er the hollow way,
And flutters wide her mantle grey,
As the lone heron spreads his wing,
By twilight, o'er a haunted spring."
"Tis Blanche of Devan," Murdoch said,
"A crazed and captive Lowland maid,
Ta'en on the morn she was a bride,
When Roderick foray'd Devan-side;
The gay bridegroom resistance made,
And felt our Chief's unconquer'd blade.
I marvel she is now at large,
But oft she 'scapes from Maudlin's charge.—
Hence, brain-sick fool!"—He raised his bow:—
"Now, if thou strikest her but one blow,
I'll pitch thee from the cliff as far
As ever peasant pitch'd a bar!"—
"Thanks, champion, thanks!" the Maniac cried,
And press'd her to Fitz-James's side.
"See the grey pennons I prepare,
To seek my true-love through the air
I will not lend that savage groom,
To break his fall, one downy plume!
No!—deep amid disjointed stones,
The wolves shall batten on his bones,
And then shall his detested plaid,
By bush and brier in mid air staid,
Wave forth a banner fair and free,
Meet signal for their revelry."—

XXIV.

"Hush thee, poor maiden, and be still!"—
"O! thou look'st kindly, and I will.—
Mine eye has dried and wasted been,
But still it loves the Lincoln green;
And, though mine ear is all unstrung,
Still, still it loves the Lowland tongue.

"For O my sweet William was forester true,
He stole poor Blanche's heart away!
His coat it was all of the greenwood hue,
And so blithely he trill'd the Lowland lay!"

"It was not that I meant to tell . . .
But thou art wise, and guessest well."
Then, in a low and broken tone,
And hurried note, the song went on.
Still on the Clansman, fearfully,
She fixed her apprehensive eye;
Then turn'd it on the Knight, and then
Her look glanced wildly o'er the glen.

XXV.

"The toils are pitch'd, and the stakes are set,
Ever sing merrily, merrily;

The bows they bend, and the knives they whet,
Hunters live so cheerily.

"It was a stag, a stag of ten,^a
Bearing its branches sturdily;
He came stately down the glen,
Ever sing hardily, hardily.

"It was there he met with a wounded doe,
She was bleeding deathfully;
She warned him of the toils below,
O, so faithfully, faithfully!

"He had an eye, and he could heed,
Ever sing warily, warily;
He had a foot, and he could speed—
Hunters watch so narrowly."

XXVI.

Fitz-James's mind was passion-toss'd,
When Ellen's hints and fears were lost;
But Murdoch's shout suspicion wrought,
And Blanche's song conviction brought.—
Not like a stag that spies the snare,
But lion of the hunt aware,
He waved at once his blade on high,
"Disclose thy treachery, or die!"
Forth at full speed the Clansman flew,
But in his race his bow he drew.
The shaft just grazed Fitz-James's crest,
And thrill'd in Blanche's faded breast.—
Murdoch of Alpine! prove thy speed,
For ne'er had Alpine's son such need!
With heart of fire, and foot of wind,
The fierce avenger is behind!
Fate judges of the rapid strife—
The forfeit death—the prize is life!
Thy kindred ambush lies before,
Close couch'd upon the heathery moor;
Them couldst thou reach!—it may not be—
Thine ambush'd kin thou ne'er shalt see,
The fiery Saxon gains on thee!
—Resistless speeds the deadly thrust,
As lightning strikes the pine to dust;
With foot and hand Fitz-James must strain
Ere he can win his blade again.
Bent o'er the fall'n, with falcon eye,
He grimly smiled to see him die;
Then slower wended back his way,
Where the poor maiden bleeding lay.

XXVII.

She sate beneath the birchen tree,
Her elbow resting on her knee;

^a Having ten branches on his antlers.

She had withdrawn the fatal shaft,
 And gazed on it, and feebly laugh'd;
 Her wreath of broom and feathers grey,
 Daggled with blood, beside her lay.
 The Knight to stanch the life-stream tried, —
 "Stranger, it is in vain!" she cried.
 "This hour of death has given me more
 Of reason's power than years before;
 For, as these ebbing veins decay,
 My frenzied visions fade away.
 A helpless injured wretch I die,
 And something tells me in thine eye,
 That thou wert mine avenger born.—
 Seest thou this tress?—O! still I've worn
 This little tress of yellow hair,
 Through danger, frenzy, and despair!
 It once was bright and clear as thine,
 But blood and tears have dimm'd its shine.
 I will not tell thee when 't was shred,
 Nor from what guiltless victim's head—
 My brain would turn!—but it shall wave
 Like plumage on thy helmet brave,
 Till sun and wind shall bleach the stain,
 And thou wilt bring it me again.—
 I waver still.—O God! more bright
 Let reason beam her parting light!—
 O! by thy knighthood's honour'd sign,
 And for thy life preserved by mine,
 When thou shalt see a darksome man,
 Who boasts him Chief of Alpine's Clan,
 With tartans broad, and shadowy plume,
 And hand of blood, and brow of gloom,
 Be thy heart bold, thy weapon strong,
 And wreak poor Blanche of Devan's wrong!
 They watch for thee by pass and fell . . .
 Avoid the path . . . O God! . . . farewell."

XXVIII.

A kindly heart had brave Fitz-James;
 Fast pour'd his eyes at pity's claims,
 And now with mingled grief and ire,
 He saw the murder'd maid expire.
 "God, in my need, be my relief,
 As I wreak this on yonder Chief!"
 A lock from Blanche's tresses fair
 He blended with her bridegroom's hair;
 The mingled braid in blood he dyed,
 And placed it on his bonnet-side:
 "By him whose word is truth! I swear,
 No other favour will I wear,
 Till this sad token I imbrue
 In the best blood of Roderick Dhu.
 —But hark! what means yon faint halloo?
 The chase is up,—but they shall know,
 The stag at bay's a dangerous foe."

Barr'd from the known but guarded way,
 Through copse and cliffs Fitz-James must stray,
 And oft must change his desperate track,
 By stream and precipice turn'd back.
 Heartless, fatigued, and faint, at length,
 From lack of food and loss of strength.
 He couch'd him in a thicket hoar,
 And thought his toils and perils o'er:—
 "Of all my rash adventures past,
 This frantic feat must prove the last!
 Who e'er so mad but might have guess'd,
 That all this Highland hornet's nest
 Would muster up in swarms so soon
 As e'er they heard of bands at Doune?
 Like bloodhounds now they search me out,—
 Hark to the whistle and the shout!—
 If further through the wilds I go,
 I only fall upon the foe:
 I'll couch me here till evening grey,
 Then darlding try my dangerous way."

XXIX.

The shades of eve come slowly down,
 The woods are wrapt in deeper brown,
 The owl awakens from her dell,
 The fox is heard upon the fell;
 Enough remains of glimmering light
 To guide the wanderer's steps aright,
 Yet not enough from far to show
 His figure to the watchful foe.
 With cautious step and ear awake,
 He climbs the crag and threads the brake;
 And not the summer solstice, there,
 Temper'd the midnight mountain air,
 But every breeze that swept the wold
 Benumb'd his drenched limbs with cold.
 In dread, in danger, and alone,
 Famish'd and chill'd, through ways unknown,
 Tangled and steep, he journey'd on;
 Till, as a rock's huge point he turn'd,
 A watch-fire close before him burn'd.

XXX.

Beside its embers red and clear,
 Bask'd, in his plaid, a mountaineer;
 And up he sprang with sword in hand,—
 "Thy name and purpose? Saxon, stand!"—
 "A stranger."—"What dost thou require?"—
 "Rest and a guide, and food and fire.
 My life's beset, my path is lost,
 The gale has chill'd my limbs with frost."—
 "Art thou a friend to Roderick?"—"No."—
 "Thou dardest not call thyself a foe?"—
 "I dare! to him and all the band
 He brings to aid his murderous hand."

"Bold words!—but, though the beast of game
 The privilege of chase may claim,
 Though space and law the stag we lend,
 Ere hound we slip, or bow we bend,
 Who ever reck'd, where, how, or when,
 The prowling fox was trapp'd or slain?³⁸
 Thus treacherous scouts,—yet sure they lie,
 Who say thou camest a secret spy!"—
 "They do, by heaven!—Come.Roderick Dhu,
 And of his clan the boldest two,
 And let me but till morning rest,
 I write the falsehood on their crest."—
 "If by the blaze I mark aright,
 Thou bear'st the belt and spur of Knight."—
 "Then by these tokens mayest thou know
 Each proud oppressor's mortal foe."—
 "Enough, enough;—sit down, and share
 A soldier's couch, a soldier's fare.

XXXI.

He gave him of his Highland cheer,
 The harden'd flesh of mountain deer;³⁹
 Dry fuel on the fire he laid,
 And bade the Saxon share his plaid.
 He tended him like welcome guest,
 Then thus his farther speech address'd:—
 "Stranger, I am to Roderick Dhu
 A clansman born, a kinsman true;
 Each word against his honour spoke,
 Demands of me avenging stroke;
 Yet more, upon thy fate, 'tis said,
 A mighty augury is laid.
 It rests with me to wind my horn,—
 Thou art with numbers overborne;
 It rests with me, here, brand to brand,
 Worn as thou art, to bid thee stand:
 But, not for clan, nor kindred's cause,
 Will I depart from honour's laws;
 To assail a wearied man were shame,
 And stranger is a holy name;
 Guidance and rest, and food and fire,
 In vain he never must require.
 Then rest thee here till dawn of day;
 Myself will guide thee on the way,
 O'er stock and stone, through watch and ward,
 Till past Clan-Alpine's utmost guard,
 As far as Coilantogle's ford;
 From thence thy warrant is thy sword."—
 "I take thy courtesy, by heaven,
 As freely as 'tis nobly given!"—
 "Well, rest thee; for the bittern's cry
 Sings us the lake's wild lullaby."
 With that he shook the gather'd heath,
 And spread his plaid upon the wreath;

And the brave foemen, side by side,
Lay peaceful down, like brothers tried,
And slept until the dawning beam
Purpled the mountain and the stream.

CANTO FIFTH.

The Combat.

I.

FAIR as the earliest beam of eastern light,
When first, by the bewilder'd pilgrim spied,
It smiles upon the dreary brow of night,
And silvers o'er the torrent's foaming tide,
And lights the fearful path on mountain side;—
Fair as that beam, although the fairest far,
Giving to horror grace, to danger pride,
Shine martial Faith, and Courtesy's bright star,
Through all the wreckful storms that cloud the brow of War.

II.

That early beam, so fair and sheen,
Was twinkling through the hazel screen,
When, rousing at its glimmer red,
The warriors left their lowly bed,
Look'd out upon the dappled sky,
Mutter'd their soldier matins by,
And then awak'd their fire, to steal,
As short and rude, their soldier meal.
That o'er the Gael^a around him threw
His graceful plaid of varied hue,
And, true to promise, led the way,
By thicket green and mountain grey.
A wildering path!—they wind'd now
Along the precipice's brow,
Commanding the rich scenes beneath,
The windings of the Forth and Teith,
And all the vales beneath that lie,
Till Stirling's turrets melt in sky;
Then, sunk in copse, their farthest glance
Gain'd not the length of horseman's lance.
'Twas oft so steep, the foot was fain
Assistance from the hand to gain;

^a The Scottish Highlander calls himself *Gael*, or *Gaul*, and terms the Lowlanders *Sassenach*, or Saxons.

So tangled oft, that, bursting through,
 Each hawthorn shed her showers of dew,—
 That diamond dew, so pure and clear,
 It rivals all but Beauty's tear !

III.

At length they came where, stern and steep,
 The hill sinks down upon the deep.
 Here Vennachar in silver flows,
 There, ridge on ridge, Benledi rose ;
 Ever the holly path twined on,
 Beneath steep bank and threatening stone ;
 An hundred men might hold the post
 With hardihood against a host.
 The rugged mountain's scanty cloak
 Was dwarfish shrubs of birch and oak,
 With shingles bare, and cliffs between,
 And patches bright of bracken green,
 And heather black, that waved so high,
 It held the copse in rivalry.
 But where the lake swept deep and still,
 Dank osiers fringed the swamp and hill ;
 And oft both path and hill were torn,
 Where wintry torrents down had borne,
 And heap'd upon the cumber'd land
 Its wreck of gravel, rocks, and sand.
 So toilsome was the road to trace,
 The guide, abating of his pace,
 Led slowly through the pass' jaws,
 And ask'd Fitz-James, by what strange cause
 He sought these wilds ! traversed by few,
 Without a pass from Roderick Dhu.

IV

" Brave Gael, my pass in danger tried,
 Hangs in my belt, and by my side ;
 Yet, sooth to tell," the Saxon said,
 " I dreamt not now to claim its aid.
 When here, but three days since, I came,
 Bewilder'd in pursuit of game,
 All seem'd as peaceful and as still
 As the mist slumbering on yon hill ;
 Thy dangerous Chief was then afar,
 Nor soon expected back from war.
 Thus said, at least, my mountain-guide,
 Though deep, perchance, the villain lied."—
 " Yet why a second venture try ?"—
 " A warrior thou, and ask me why !—
 Moves our free course by such fix'd cause
 As gives the poor mechanic laws ?
 Enough, I sought to drive away
 The lazy hours of peaceful day ;
 Slight cause will then suffice to guide
 A Knight's free footsteps far and wide,—

A falcon flown, a greyhound stray'd,
The merry glance of mountain maid:
Or, if a path be dangerous known,
The danger's self is lure alone."—

V.

- "Thy secret keep, I urge thee not;—
Yet, ere again ye sought this spot,
Say, heard ye nought of Lowland war,
Against Clan-Alpine, raised by Mar?"
—"No, by my word;—of bands prepared
To guard King James's sports I heard;
Nor doubt I aught, but, when they hear
This muster of the mountaineer,
Their pennons will abroad be flung,
Which else in Doune had peaceful hung."—
"Free be they flung!—for we were loth
Their silken folds should feast the moth.
Free be they flung!—as free shall wave
Clan-Alpine's pine in banner brave.
But, Stranger, peaceful since you came,
Bewilder'd in the mountain game,
Whence the bold boast by which you show
Vich-Alpine's vow'd and mortal foe?"—
"Warrior, but yester-morn, I knew
Nought of thy Chieftain, Roderick Dhu,
Save as an outlaw'd desperate man,
The chief of a rebellious clan,
Who, in the Regent's court and sight,
With ruffian dagger stabb'd a knight:
Yet this alone might from his part
Sever each true and loyal heart."

VI.

- Wrothful at such arraignment foul,
Dark lower'd the clansman's sable scowl.
A space he paused, then sternly said,
"And heardst thou why he drew his blade?
Heardst thou, that shameful word and blow
Brought Roderick's vengeance on his foe?
What reck'd the Chieftain if he stood
On Highland heath, or Holy-Rood?
He rights wrong where it is given,
If it were in the court of heaven."—
"Still was it outrage;—yet, 'tis true,
Not then claim'd sovereignty his due;
While Albany, with feeble hand,
Held borrow'd truncheon of command,⁴⁰
The young King, mew'd in Stirling tower,
Was stranger to respect and power.
But then, thy Chieftain's robber life!—
Winning mean prey by causeless strife,
Wrenching from ruin'd Lowland swain
His herds and harvest rear'd in vain.—

Methinks a soul, like thine, should scorn
The spoils from such foul foray borne."

VII.

The Gael beheld him grim the while,
And answer'd with disdainful smile,—
"Saxon, from yonder mountain high,
I mark'd thee send delighted eye,
Far to the south and east, where lay,
Extended in succession gay,
Deep waving fields and pastures green,
With gentle slopes and groves between :—
These fertile plains, that soften'd vale,
Were once the birthright of the Gael ;
The stranger came with iron hand,
And from our fathers reft the land.
Where dwell we now? See, rudely swell
Crag over crag, and fell o'er fell.
Ask we this savage hill we tread,
For fatten'd steer or household bread ;
Ask we for flocks these shingles dry,
And well the mountain might reply,—
"To you, as to your sires of yore,
Belong the target and claymore!
I give you shelter in my breast,
Your own good blades must win the rest.
Pent in this fortress of the North,
Thinkst thou we will not sally forth,
To spoil the spoiler as we may,
And from the robber rend the prey?
Ay, by my soul !—While on yon plain
The Saxon rears one shock of grain ;
While, of ten thousand herds, there strays
But one along yon river's maze,—
The Gael, of plain and river heir,
Shall, with strong hand, redeem his share.
Where live the mountain Chiefs who hold,
That plundering Lowland field and fold
Is aught but retribution true?
Seek other cause 'gainst Roderick Dhu."—

VIII.

Answer'd Fitz-James,—“And, if I sought,
Thinkst thou no other could be brought?
What deem ye of my path waylaid?
My life given o'er to ambuscade?”—
“As of a need to rashness due :
Hadst thou sent warning fair and true,—
I seek my hound, or falcon stray'd,
I seek, good faith, a Highland maid,—
Free hadst thou been to come and go ;
But secret path marks secret foe.
Nor yet, for this, even as a spy,
Hadst thou, unheard, been doom'd to die

Save to fulfil an augury."—
"Well, let it pass; nor will I now
Fresh cause of enmity avow,
To chafe thy mood and cloud thy brow.
Enough, I am by promise tied
To match me with this man of pride:
Twice have I sought Clan-Alpine's glen
In peace; but when I come again
I come with banner, brand, and bow,
As leader seeks his mortal foe.
For love-lorn swain, in lady's bower,
Ne'er panted for the appointed hour,
As I, until before me stand,
This rebel Chieftain and his band!"—

IX.

"Have, then, thy wish!"—he whistled shrill,
And he was answer'd from the hill;
Wild as the scream of the curlew,
From crag to crag the signal flew.
Instant, through copse and heath, arose
Bonnets and spears and bended bows;
On right, on left, above, below,
Sprung up at once the lurking foe;
From shingles grey their lances start,
The bracken bush sends forth the dart,
The rushes and the willow-wand
Are bristling into axe and brand,
And every tuft of broom gives life
To plaided warrior arm'd for strife.
That whistle garrison'd the glen
At once with full five hundred men,
As if the yawning hill to heaven
A subterranean host had given.
Watching their leader's beck and will,
All silent there they stood, and still.
Like the loose crags, whose threatening mass
Lay tottering o'er the hollow pass,
As if an infant's touch could urge
Their headlong passage down the verge,
With step and weapon forward flung,
Upon the mountain-side they hung.
The Mountaineer cast glance of pride
Along Benledi's living side,
Then fix'd his eye and sable brow
Full on Fitz-James—"How say'st thou now?
These are Clan-Alpine's warriors true;
And, Saxon,—I am Roderick Dhu!"

X.

Fitz-James was brave:—Though to his heart
The life-blood thrill'd with sudden start,
He mann'd himself with dauntless air,
Return'd the Chief his haughty stare,

His back against a rock he bore,
 And firmly placed his foot before :—
 “Come one, come all! this rock shall fly
 From its firm base as soon as I.”
 Sir Roderick mark’d—and in his eyes
 Respect was mingled with surprise,
 And the stern joy which warriors feel
 In foemen worthy of their steel.
 Short space he stood—then waved his hand:
 Down sunk the disappearing band;
 Each warrior vanish’d where he stood,
 In broom or bracken, heath or wood;
 Sunk brand and spear and bended bow
 In osiers pale and copses low;
 It seem’d as if their mother Earth
 Had swallowed up her warlike birth.
 The wind’s last breath had toss’d in air,
 Pennon, and plaid, and plumage fair,—
 The next but swept a lone hill-side,
 Where heath and fern were waving wide
 The sun’s last glance was glinted back,
 From spear and glaive, from targe and jack,—
 The next, all unreflected, shone
 On bracken green, and cold grey stone.

XI.

Fitz-James look’d round—yet scarce believed
 The witness that his sight received;
 Such apparition well might seem
 Delusion of a dreadful dream.
 Sir Roderick in suspense he eyed,
 And to his look the Chief replied,
 “Fear nought—nay, that I need not say—
 But—doubt not aught from mine array.
 Thou art my guest;—I pledged my word
 As far as Coilantogle ford:
 Nor would I call a clansman’s brand
 For aid against one valiant hand,
 Though on our strife lay every vale
 Rent by the Saxon from the Gael.
 So move we on;—I only meant
 To show the reed on which you leant,
 Deeming this path you might pursue
 Without a pass from Roderick Dhu.”⁴¹
 They mov’d:—I said Fitz-James was brave,
 As ever knight that belted glaive;
 Yet dare not say, that now his blood
 Kept on its wont and temper’d flood,
 As, following Roderick’s stride, he drew
 That seeming lonesome pathway through,
 Which yet, by fearful proof, was rife
 With lances, that, to take his life,
 Waited but signal from a guide
 So late dishonour’d and defied.

Ever, by stealth, his eye sought round
 The vanish'd guardians of the ground,
 And still, from copse and heather deep,
 Fancy saw spear and broadsword peep,
 And in the plover's shrilly strain,
 The signal whistle heard again.
 Nor breathed he free till far behind
 The pass was left; for then they wind
 Along a wide and level green,
 Where neither tree nor tuft was seen,
 Nor rush nor bush of broom was near,
 To hide a bonnet or a spear.

XII.

The Chief in silence strode before,
 And reach'd that torrent's sounding shore,
 Which, daughter of three mighty lakes,
 From Vennachar in silver breaks,
 Sweeps through the plain, and ceaseless mines
 On Bochastle the mouldering lines,
 Where Rome, the Empress of the world,
 Of yore her eagle wings unfurl'd.⁴²
 And here his course the Chieftain staid,
 Threw down his target and his plaid,
 And to the Lowland warrior said—
 "Bold Saxon! to his promise just,
 Vich Alpine has discharged his trust.
 This murderous Chief, this ruthless man,
 This head of a rebellious clan,
 Hath led thee safe, through watch and ward,
 Far past Clan-Alpine's outmost guard.
 Now, man to man, and steel to steel,
 A Chieftain's vengeance thou shalt feel.
 See here, all vantageless I stand,
 Arm'd, like thyself, with single brand:⁴³
 For this is Coillantogle ford,
 And thou must keep thee with thy sword."

XIII.

The Saxon paused:—"I ne'er delay'd,
 When foeman bade me draw my blade,
 Nay, more, brave Chief, I vow'd thy death:
 Yet sure thy fair and generous faith,
 And my deep debt for life preserv'd,
 A better meed have well deserved:
 Can nought but blood our feud atone?
 Are there no means?"—"No, Stranger, none;
 And hear,—to fire thy flagging zeal,—
 The Saxon cause rests on thy steel;
 For thus spoke Fate, by prophet bred
 Between the living and the dead:
 Who spills the foremost foeman's life,
 His party conquers in the strife."—
 "Then, by my word," the Saxon said,
 "The riddle is already read."

Seek yonder brake beneath the cliff,—
 There lies Red Murdoch, stark and stiff.
 Thus Fate has solved her prophecy,
 Then yield to Fate, and not to me.
 To James, at Stirling, let us go,
 When, if thou wilt be still his foe,
 Or if the King shall not agree
 To grant thee grace and favour free,
 I plight mine honour, oath, and word,
 That, to thy native strengths restored,
 With each advantage shalt thou stand,
 That aids thee now to guard thy land."

XIV.

Dark lightning flash'd from Roderick's eye—
 "Soars thy presumption, then, so high,
 Because a wretched kern ye slew,
 Homage to name to Roderick Dhu?
 He yields not, he, to man nor Fate!
 Thou add'st but fuel to my hate:—
 My clansman's blood demands revenge.
 Not yet prepared?—By heaven, I change
 My thought, and hold thy valour light
 As that of some vain carpet knight,
 Who ill deserved my courteous care,
 And whose best boast is but to wear
 A braid of his fair lady's hair."—
 "I thank thee, Roderick, for the word!
 It nerves my heart, it steels my sword;
 For I have sworn this braid to stain
 In the best blood that warms thy vein.
 Now, truce, farewell! and, ruth, begone!—
 Yet think not that by thee alone,
 Proud Chief! can courtesy be shown;
 Though not from copse, or heath, or cairn,
 Start at my whistle clansmen stern,
 Of this small horn one feeble blast
 Would fearful odds against thee cast.
 But fear not—doubt not—which thou wilt—
 We try this quarrel hilt to hilt."—
 Then each at once his falchion drew,
 Each on the ground his scabbard threw,
 Each look'd to sun, and stream, and plain,
 As what they ne'er might see again;
 Then foot, and point, and eye opposed,
 In dubious strife they darkly closed.

XV.

Ill fared it then with Roderick Dhu,
 That on the field his targe he threw,⁴⁴
 Whose brazen studs and tough bull-hide
 Had death so often dash'd aside;
 For, train'd abroad his arms to wield,
 Fitz-James's blade was sword and shield.

He practised every pass and ward,
To thrust, to strike, to feint, to guard;
While less expert, though stronger far,
The Gael maintain'd unequal war.
Three times in closing strife they stood,
And thrice the Saxon blade drank blood;
No stinted draught, no scanty tide,
The gushing flood the tartans dyed.
Fierce Roderick felt the fatal drain,
And shower'd his blows like wintry rain;
And, as firm rock, or castle-roof,
Against the winter shower is proof,
The foe, invulnerable still,
Foil'd his wild rage by steady skill;
Till, at advantage ta'en, his brand
Forced Roderick's weapon from his hand,
And backward borne upon the lea,
Brought the proud Chieftain to his knee.

XVI.

"Now, yield thee, or by Him who made
The world, thy heart's blood dyes my blade!"—
"Thy threats, thy mercy, I defy!
Let recreant yield, who fears to die."
—Like adder darting from his coil,
Like wolf that dashes through the toil,
Like mountain-cat who guards her young,
Full at Fitz-James's throat he sprang;
Receiv'd, but reck'd not of a wound,
And lock'd his arms his foeman round.—
Now, gallant Saxon, hold thine own!
No maiden's hand is round thee thrown!
That desperate grasp thy frame might feel,
Through bars of brass and triple steel!—
They tug, they strain! down, down they go,
The Gael above, Fitz-James below.
The Chieftain's gripe his throat compress'd,
His knee was planted on his breast;
His clotted locks he backward threw,
Across his brow his hand he drew,
From blood and mist to clear his sight,
Then gleam'd aloft his dagger bright!—
—But hate and fury ill supplied
The stream of life's exhausted tide,
And all too late the advantage came,
To turn the odds of deadly game;
For, while the dagger gleam'd on high,
Reel'd soul and sense, reel'd brain and eye,
Down came the blow! but in the heath
The erring blade found bloodless sheath.
The struggling foe may now unclasp
The fainting Chief's relaxing grasp;
Unwounded from the dreadful close,
But breathless all, Fitz-James arose.

XVII.

He falter'd thanks to Heaven for life,
 Redeem'd, unhoped, from desperate strife;
 Next on his foe his look ne cast,
 Whose every gasp appear'd his last;
 In Roderick's gore he dipp'd the braid,—
 "Poor Blanche! thy wrongs are dearly paid:
 Yet with thy foe must die, or live,
 The praise that faith and valour give."
 With that he blew a bugle note,
 Undid the collar from his throat,
 Unbonneted, and by the wave
 Sate down his brow and hands to lave.
 Then faint afar are heard the feet
 Of rushing steeds in gallop fleet;
 The sounds increase, and now are seen
 Four mounted squires in Lincoln green;
 Two who bear lance, and two who lead,
 By loosen'd rein, a saddled steed;
 Each onward held his headlong course,
 And by Fitz-James rein'd up his horse,—
 With wonder view'd the bloody spot—
 —"Exclaim not, gallants! question not.—
 You, Herbert and Luffness, alight,
 And bind the wounds of yonder knight;
 Let the grey palfrey bear his weight,
 We destined for a fairer freight,
 And bring him on to Stirling straight;
 I will before at better speed,
 To seek fresh horse and fitting weed.
 The sun rides high;—I must be bounè
 To see the archer game at noon;
 But lightly Bayard clears the lea.—
 De Vaux and Herries, follow me.

XVIII.

"Stand, Bayard, stand!"—the steed obey'd,
 With arching neck and bended head,
 And glancing eye and quivering ear,
 As if he loved his lord to hear.
 No foot Fitz-James in stirrup staid,
 No grasp upon the saddle laid,
 But wreathed his left hand in the mane,
 And lightly bounded from the plain;
 Turn'd on the horse his armed heel,
 And stir'd his courage with the steel.
 Bounded the fiery steed in air,
 The rider sate erect and fair,
 Then like a bolt from steel crossbow
 Forth launch'd, along the plain they go.
 They dash'd that rapid torrent through,
 And up Carhonie's hill they flew;
 Still at the gallop prick'd the Knight,
 His merry-men follow'd as they might.

Along thy banks, swift Teith! they ride,
 And in the race they mock thy tide;
 Torry and Lendrick now are past,
 And Deanstown lies benind them cast;
 They rise, the banner'd towers of Doune,
 They sink in distant woodland soon;
 Blair-Drummond sees the hoofs strike fire,
 They sweep like breeze through Ochertyre;
 They mark just glance and disappear
 The lofty brow of ancient Kier;
 They bathe their coursers' sweltering sides,
 Dark Forth! amid thy sluggish tides,
 And on the opposing shore take ground,
 With plash, with scramble, and with bound.
 Right-hand they leave thy cliffs, Craig-Forth!
 And soon the bulwark of the North,
 Grey Stirling, with her towers and town,
 Upon their fleet career look'd down.

XIX.

As up the flinty path they strain'd,
 Sudden his steed the leader rein'd;
 A signal to his squire he flung,
 Who instant to his stirrup sprung:—
 "Seest thou, De Vaux, yon woodsman grey
 Who town-ward holds the rocky way,
 Of stature tall and poor array?
 Mark'st thou the firm, yet active stride,
 With which he scales the mountain-side?
 Know'st thou from whence he comes, or whom?"
 "No, by my word;—a burly groom
 He seems, who in the field or chase
 A baron's train would nobly grace."—
 "Out, out, De Vaux! can fear supply,
 And jealousy, no sharper eye?
 Afar, ere to the hill he drew,
 That stately form and step I knew;
 Like form in Scotland is not seen,
 Treads not such step on Scottish green.
 'Tis James of Douglas, by Saint Serle!
 The uncle of the banish'd Earl.
 Away, away, to court, to show
 The near approach of dreaded foe:
 The King must stand upon his guard;
 Douglas and he must meet prepared."
 Then right-hand wheel'd their steeds, and straight
 They won the castle's postern gate.

XX.

The Douglas, who had bent his way
 From Cambus-Kenneth's abbey grey,
 Now, as he climb'd the rocky shelf,
 Held sad communion with himself:—
 "Yes! all is true my fears could frame
 A prisoner lies the noble Grame,

And fiery Roderick soon will feel
 The vengeance of the royal steel.
 I, only I, can ward their fate,—
 God grant the ransom come not late!
 The abbess hath her promise given,
 My child shall be the bride of heaven;—
 —Be pardon'd one repining tear!
 For He, who gave her, knows how dear,
 How excellent! but that is by,
 And now my business is—to die.
 —Ye towers! within whose circuit dread
 A Douglas by his sovereign bled;
 And thou, O sad and fatal mound!
 That oft hast heard the death-axe sound,
 As on the noblest of the land
 Fell the stern headsman's bloody hand,—
 The dungeon, block, and nameless tomb
 Prepare—for Douglas seeks his doom!
 —But hark! what blithe and jolly peal
 Makes the Franciscan steeple reel?
 And see! upon the crowded street
 In motley groups what masquers meet!
 Banner and pageant, pipe and drum,
 And merry morrice-dancers come.
 I guess, by all this quaint array,
 The burghers hold their sports to-day.⁴⁵
 James will be there; he loves such show,
 Where the good yeoman bends his bow,
 And the tough wrestler foils his foe,
 As well as where, in proud career,
 The high-born tilter shivers spear.
 I'll follow to the Castle-park,
 And play my prize;—King James shall mark,
 If age has tamed these sinews stark,
 Whose force so oft, in happier days,
 His boyish wonder loved to praise.⁴⁶

XXI.

The Castle gates were open flung,
 The quivering draw-bridge rock'd and rung,
 And echo'd loud the flinty street
 Beneath the coursers' clattering feet,
 As slowly down the steep descent
 Fair Scotland's King and nobles went,
 While all along the crowded way
 Was jubilee and loud hazza.
 And ever James was bending low,
 To his white jennet's saddiebow,
 Doffing his cap to city dame,
 Who smiled and blush'd for pride and shame.
 And well the simperer might be vain—
 He chose the fairest of the train.
 Gravely he greets each city sire,
 Commends each pageant's quaint attire,

Gives to the dancers thanks aloud,
 And smiles and nods upon the crowd,
 Who rend the heavens with their acclaims--
 "Long live the Commons' King, King James!"
 Behind the King throng'd peer and knight.
 And noble dame and damsel bright,
 Whose fiery steeds ill brook'd the stay
 Of the steep street and crowded way,
 —But in the train you might discern
 Dark lowering brow and visage stern:
 There nobles mourn'd their pride restrain'd,
 And the mean burgher's joys disdain'd;
 And chiefs, who, hostage for their clan,
 Were each from home a banish'd man,
 There thought upon their own grey tower,
 Their waving woods, their feudal power
 And deem'd themselves a shameful part
 Of pageant which they cursed in heart.

XXII.

Now, in the Castle-park, drew out
 Their chequer'd bands the joyous route.
 There morricers, with bell at heel,
 And blade in hand, their mazes wheel;
 But chief, beside the butts, there stand
 Bold Robin Hood⁴⁶ and all his band,—
 Friar Tuck with quarterstaff and cowl,
 Old Scathelock with his surly scowl,
 Maid Marion, fair as ivory bone,
 Scarlet, and Mutch, and Little John;
 Their bugles challenge all that will,
 In archery to prove their skill.
 The Douglas bent a bow of might,—
 His first shaft centred in the white,
 And when in turn he shot again,
 His second split the first in twain.
 From the King's hand must Douglas take
 A silver dart, the archer's stake;
 Fondly he watch'd, with watery eye,
 Some answering glance of sympathy,—
 No kind emotion made reply!
 Indifferent as to archer wight,
 The monarch gave the arrow bright.

XXIII.

Now, clear the ring! for, hand to hand.
 The manly wrestlers take their stand.
 Two o'er the rest superior rose,
 And proud demanded mightier foes,
 Nor call'd in vain; for Douglas came.
 —For life is Hugh of Larbert lame;
 Scarce better John of Alloa's fare,
 Whom senseless home his comrades bare.
 Prize of the wrestling match, the King
 To Douglas gave a golden ring⁴⁷

While coldly glanced his eye of blue,
As frozen drop of wintry dew.
Douglas would speak, but in his breast
His struggling soul his words suppress'd;
Indignant then he turn'd him where
Their arms the brawny yeomen bare,
To hurl the massive bar in air.
When each his utmost strength had shown,
The Douglas rent an earth-fast stone
From its deep bed, then heaved it high,
And sent the fragment through the sky,
A rood beyond the farthest mark;
And still in Stirling's royal park,
The grey-hair'd sires, who know the past,
To strangers point the Douglas cast,
And moralize on the decay
Of Scottish strength in modern day.

XXIV.

The vale with loud applauses rang,
The Ladies' Rock sent back the clang.
The King, with look unmoved, bestow'd
A purse well filled with pieces broad.
Indignant smiled the Douglas proud,
And threw the gold among the crowd,
Who now, with anxious wonder, scan,
And sharper glance, the dark grey man;
Till whispers rose among the throng,
That heart so free, and hand so strong,
Must to the Douglas blood belong;
The old men mark'd, and shook the head,
To see his hair with silver spread,
And wink'd aside, and told each son,
Of feats upon the English done,
Ere Douglas of the stalwart hand
Was exiled from his native land.
The women prais'd his stately form,
Though wreck'd by many a winter's storm;
The youth with awe and wonder saw
His strength surpassing Nature's law.
Thus judged, as is their wont, the crowd,
Till murmur rose to clamours loud.
But not a glance from that proud ring
Of peers who circled round the King,
With Douglas held communion kind,
Or call'd the banish'd man to mind;
No, not from those who, at the chase,
Once held his side the honour'd place,
Begirt his board, and, in the field,
Found safety underneath his shield;
For he, whom royal eyes disown,
When was his form to courtiers known!

XXV.

The Monarch saw the gambols flag,
And bade let loose a gallant stag,

Whose pride, the holiday to crown,
 Two favourite greyhounds should pull down,
 That venison free, and Bourdeaux wine,
 Might serve the archery to dine.
 But Lufra,—whom from Douglas' side
 Nor bribe nor threat could e'er divide,
 The fleetest hound in all the North,—
 Brave Lufre saw, and darted forth.
 She left the royal hounds mid-way,
 And dashing on the antler'd prey,
 Sunk her sharp muzzle in his flank,
 And deep the flowing life-blood drank.
 The King's stout huntsman saw the sport
 By strange intruder broken short,
 Came up, and with his leash unbound,
 In anger struck the noble hound.
 —The Douglas had endured, that morn,
 The King's cold look, the nobles' scorn,
 And last, and worst to spirit proud,
 Had borne the pity of the crowd;
 But Lufra had been fondly bred,
 To share his board, to watch his bed,
 And oft would Ellen Lufra's neck
 In maiden glee with garlands deck;
 They were such playmates, that with name
 Of Lufra, Ellen's image came.
 His stifled wrath is brimming high,
 In darken'd brow and flashing eye;
 As waves before the bark divide,
 The crowd gave way before his stride;
 Needs but a buffet and no more,
 The groom lies senseless in his gore.
 Such blow no other hand could deal,
 Though gauntleted in glove of steel.

XXVI.

Then clamour'd loud the royal train,
 And brandish'd swords and staves amain.
 But stern the Baron's warning—"Back!
 Back, on your lives, ye menial pack!
 Beware the Douglas.—Yes! behold,
 King James! The Douglas, doom'd of old,
 And vainly sought for near and far,
 A victim to atone the war,
 A willing victim now attends,
 Nor craves thy grace but for his friends."—
 "Thus is my clemency repaid?
 Presumptuous Lord!" the Monarch said;
 "Of thy mis-proud ambitious clan,
 Thou, James of Bothwell, wert the man,
 The only man, in whom a foe
 My woman-mercy would not know:
 But shall a Monarch's presence brook
 Injurious blow, and haughty look?—
 What ho! the Captain of our Guard!
 Give the offender fitting ward.—

Break off the sports!"—for tumult rose,
 And yeomen 'gan to bend their bows,—
 "Break off the sports!" he said, and frown'd,
 "And bid our horsemen clear the ground."

XXVII.

'Then uproar wild and misarray
 Marr'd the fair form of festal day.
 The horsemen prick'd among the crowd,
 Repell'd by threats and insult loud;
 To earth are borne the old and weak,
 The timorous fly, the women shriek;
 With flint, with shaft, with staff, with bar,
 The hardier urge tumultuous war.
 At once round Douglas darkly sweep
 The royal spears in circle deep,
 And slowly scale the pathway steep;
 While on the rear in thunder pour
 The rabble with disorder'd roar.
 With grief the noble Douglas saw
 The Commons rise against the law,
 And to the leading soldier said,—
 "Sir John of Hyndford! 't was my blade
 That knighthood on thy shoulder laid;
 For that good deed, permit me then
 A word with these misguided men.—

XXVIII.

"Hear, gentle friends! ere yet for me
 Ye break the bands of fealty.
 My life, my honour, and my cause,
 I tender free to Scotland's laws.
 Are these so weak as must require
 The aid of your misguided ire?
 Or, if I suffer causeless wrong,
 Is then my selfish rage so strong,
 My sense of public weal so low,
 That, for mean vengeance on a foe,
 Those cords of love I should unbind,
 Which knit my country and my kind?
 Oh no! Believe, in yonder tower
 It will not soothe my captive hour,
 To know those spears our foes should dread,
 For me in kindred gore are red;
 To know, in fruitless brawl begun,
 For me that mother wails her son;
 For me, that widow's mate expires;
 For me, that orphans weep their sires;
 That patriots mourn insulted laws,
 And curse the Douglas for the cause.
 O let your patience ward such ill,
 And keep your right to love me still!"

XXIX.

The crowd's wild fury sunk again
 In tears, as tempests melt in rain.

With lifted hands and eyes, they pray'd
 For blessings on his generous head,
 Who for his country felt alone,
 And prized her blood beyond his own.
 Old men, upon the verge of life,
 Bless'd him who stay'd the civil strife;
 And mothers held their babes on high,
 The self-devoted Chief to spy,
 Triumphant over wrongs and ire,
 To whom the pratflers owed a sire:
 Even the rough soldier's heart was moved;
 As if behind some bier beloved,
 With trailing arms and drooping head,
 The Douglas up the hill he led,
 And at the Castle's battled verge,
 With sighs resign'd his honour'd charge.

XXX.

The offended Monarch rode apart,
 With bitter thought and swelling heart,
 And would not now vouchsafe again
 Through Stirling streets to lead his train —
 "O Lennox, who would wish to rule
 This changeling crowd, this common fool?
 Hear'st thou," he said, "the loud acclaim,
 With which they shout the Douglas name?
 With like acclaim, the vulgar throat
 Strain'd for King James their morning note;
 With like acclaim they hail'd the day
 When first I broke the Douglas' sway;
 And like acclaim would Douglas greet,
 If he could hurl me from my seat.
 Who o'er the herd would wish to reign,
 Fantastic, fickle, fierce, and vain!
 Vain as the leaf upon the stream,
 And fickle as a changeful dream;
 Fantastic as a woman's mood,
 And fierce as Frenzy's fever'd blood,
 Thou many-headed monster-thing,
 O who would wish to be thy king!

XXXI.

"But soft! what messenger of speed
 Spurs hitherward his panting steed?
 I guess his cognizance afar—
 What from our cousin, John of Mar?"—
 "He prays, my liege, your sports keep bound
 Within the safe and guarded ground:
 For some foul purpose yet unknown,—
 Most sure for evil to the throne,—
 The outlaw'd Chieftain, Roderick Dhu,
 Has summon'd his rebellious crew;
 'Tis said, in James of Bothwell's aid
 These loose banditti stand array'd.

The Earl of Mar, this morn, from Doune,
To break their muster march'd, and soon
Your grace will hear of battle fought;
But earnestly the Earl besought,
Till for such danger he provide,
With scanty train you will not ride."

XXXII.

"Thou warn'st me I have done amiss —
I should have earlier look'd to this:
I lost it in this bustling day.
—Retrace with speed thy former way;
Spare not for spoiling of thy steed,
The best of mine shall be thy meed.
Say to our faithful Lord of Mar,
We do forbid the intended war:
Roderick, this morn, in single fight,
Was made our prisoner by a knight;
And Douglas hath himself and cause
Submitted to our kingdom's laws.
The tidings of their leaders lost
Will soon dissolve the mountain host,
Nor would we that the vulgar feel,
For their Chief's crimes, avenging steel.
Bear Mar our message, Braco: fly!" —
He turn'd his steed,—"My liege, I hie, —
Yet, ere I cross this lily lawn,
I fear the broadswords will be drawn."
The turf the flying courser spurn'd,
And to his towers the King return'd.

XXXIII.

Ill with King James' mood that day,
Suited gay feast and minstrel lay;
Soon were dismiss'd the courtly throng,
And soon cut short the festal song.
Nor less upon the sadden'd town
The evening sunk in sorrow down.
The burghers spoke of civil jar,
Of rumour'd feuds and mountain war,
Of Moray, Mar, and Roderick Dhu,
All up in arms:—the Douglas too,
They mourn'd him pent within the hold,
"Where stout Earl William was of old"—
And there his word the speaker staid,
And finger on his lip he laid,
Or pointed to his dagger blade.
But jaded horsemen, from the west,
At evening to the Castle press'd;
And busy talkers said they bore
Tidings of fight on Katrine's shore;
At noon the deadly fray begun,
And lasted till the set of sun.
Thus giddy rumour shook the town,
Till closed the Night her pennons brown.

CANTO SIXTH.

The Guard-Room.

I.

The sun, awakening, through the smoky air
 Of the dark city casts a sullen glance,
 Rousing each caitiff to his task of care,
 Of sinful man the sad inheritance;
 Summoning revellers from the lagging dance,
 Scaring the prowling robber to his den;
 Gilding on battled tower the warder's lance,
 And warning student pale to leave his pen,
 And yield his drowsy eyes to the kind nurse of men.

What various scenes, and, O! what scenes of woe,
 Are witness'd by that red and struggling beam!
 The fever'd patient, from his pallet low,
 Through crowded hospital beholds its stream;
 The ruin'd maiden trembles at its gleam,
 The debtor wakes to thought of gyve and jail,
 The love-lorn wretch starts from tormenting dream;
 The wakeful mother, by the glimmering pale,
 Trims her sick infant's couch, and soothes his feeble wail.

II.

At dawn the towers of Stirling rang
 With soldier-step and weapon-clang,
 While drums, with rolling note, foretell
 Relief to weary sentinel.
 Through narrow loop and casement barr'd,
 The sunbeams sought the Court of Guard,
 And, struggling with the smoky air,
 Deaden'd the torches' yellow glare.
 In comfortless alliance shone
 The lights through arch of blacken'd stone,
 And show'd wild shapes in garb of war,
 Faces deform'd with beard and scar,
 All haggard from the midnight watch,
 And fever'd with the stern debauch;
 For the oak table's massive board,
 Flooded with wine, with fragments stored,
 And beakers drain'd, and cups o'erthrown,
 Show'd in what sport the night had flown.
 Some, weary, snored on floor and bench;
 Some labour'd still their thirst to quench.

Some, chill'd with watching, spread their hands
O'er the huge chimney's dying brands,
While round them, or beside them flung,
At every step their harness rung.

III.

These drew not for their fields the sword,
Like tenants of a feudal lord,
Nor own'd the patriarchal claim
Of Chieftain in their leader's name;
Adventurers they, from far who roved,
To live by battle which they loved.⁴²
There the Italian's clouded face,
The swarthy Spaniard's there you trace;
The mountain-loving Switzer there
More freely breath'd in mountain-air;
The Fleming there despised the soil,
That paid so ill the labourer's toil;
Their rolls show'd French and German name;
And merry England's exiles came,
To share, with ill-conceal'd disdain,
Of Scotland's pay the scanty gain.
All brave in arms, well train'd to wield
The heavy halberd, brand, and shield;
In camps licentious, wild, and bold;
In pillage fierce and uncontroll'd;
And now, by holytide and feast,
From rules of discipline released.

IV.

They held debate of bloody fray,
Fought t'wixt Loch Katrine and Achray.
Fierce was their speech, and, 'mid their words,
Their hands oft grappled to their swords;
Nor sunk their tone to spare the ear
Of wounded comrades groaning near,
Whose mangled limbs, and bodies gored,
Bore token of the mountain sword,
Though, neighbouring to the Court of Guard,
Their prayers and feverish walls were heard;
Sad burden to the ruffian joke,
And savage oath by fury spoke!—
At length up-started John of Brent,
A yeoman from the banks of Trent;
A stranger to respect or fear,
In peace a chaser of the deer,
In host a hardy mutineer,
But still the boldest of the crew,
When deed of danger was to do.
He grieved, that day, their games cut short,
And marr'd the dicer's brawling sport,
And shouted loud, "Renew the bowl!
And, while a merry catch I troll,
Let each the buxom chorus bear,
Like brethren of the brand and spear."

V.

Soldier's Song.

Our vicar still preaches that Peter and Poule
 Laid a swinging long curse on the bonny brown bowl,
 That there's wrath and despair in the jolly black-jack,
 And the seven deadly sins in a flagon of sack;
 Yet whoop, Barnaby! off with thy liquor,
 Drink upsees^a out, and a fig for the vicar!

Our vicar he calls it damnation to sip
 The ripe ruddy dew of a woman's dear lip,
 Says, that Beelzebub lurks in her kerchief so sly,
 And Apollyon shoots darts from her merry black eye;
 Yet whoop, Jack! kiss Gillian the quicker,
 Till she bloom like a rose, and a fig for the vicar!

Our vicar thus preaches—and why should he not?
 For the dues of his cure are the placket and pot;
 And 'tis right of his office poor laymen to lurch,
 Who infringe the domains of our good Mother Church.
 Yet whoop, bully-boys! off with your liquor,
 Sweet Marjorie's the word, and a fig for the vicar!

VI.

The warder's challenge, heard without,
 Staid in mid-roar the merry shout.
 A soldier to the portal went,—
 "Here is old Bertram, sirs, of Ghent;
 And,—beat for jubilee the drum!
 A maid and minstrel with him come."
 Bertram, a Fleming, grey and scarr'd,
 Was entering now the Court of Guard,
 A harper with him, and in plaid
 All muffled close, a mountain maid,
 Who backward shrunk to 'scape the view
 Of the loose scene and boisterous crew.
 "What news?" they roar'd.—"I only know,
 From noon till eve we fought with foe,
 As wild and as untameable
 As the rude mountains where they dwell;
 On both sides store of blood is lost,
 Nor much success can either boast."—
 "But whence thy captives, friend? such spoil
 As theirs must needs reward thy toil.
 Old dost thou wax, and wars grow sharp;
 Thou now hast glee-maiden and harp!
 Get thee an ape, and trudge the land,
 The leader of a juggler band."⁴³

VII.

"No, comrade;—no such fortune mine.
 After the fight, these sought our line,

^a Bacchanalian interjection, borrowed from the Dutch.

That aged harper and the girl,
 And, having audience of the Earl,
 Mar bade I should purvey them steed,
 And bring them hitherward with speed.
 Forbear your mirth and rude alarm,
 For none shall do them shame or harm."—
 "Hear ye his boast?" cried John of Brent,
 Ever to strife and jangling bent;
 "Shall he strike doe beside our lodge,
 And yet the jealous niggard grudge
 To pay the forester his fee?
 I'll have my share howe'er it be,
 Despite of Moray, Mar, or thea."
 Bertram his forward step withstood;
 And, burning in his vengeful mood,
 Old Allan, though unfit for strife,
 Laid hand upon his dagger-knife;
 But Ellen boldly stepp'd between,
 And dropp'd at once the tartan screen :—
 So, from his mourning cloud, appears
 The sun of May, through summer tears.
 The savage soldiery, amazed,
 As on descended angel gazed;
 Even hardy Brent, abash'd and tamed,
 Stood half admiring half ashamed.

VIII.

Boldly she spoke,—“Soldiers, attend!
 My father was the soldier's friend;
 Cheer'd him in camps, in marches led,
 And with him in the battle bled.
 Not from the valiant, or the strong,
 Should exile's daughter suffer wrong.”—
 Answer'd De Brent, most forward still
 In every feat or good or ill,—
 “I shame me of the part I play'd;
 And thou an outlaw's child, poor maid!
 An outlaw I by forest laws,
 And merry Needwood knows the cause.
 Poor Rose,—if Rose be living now,”—
 He wiped his iron eye and brow,—
 “Must bear such age, I think as thou. —
 Hear ye, my mates;—I go to call
 The Captain of our watch to hall:
 There lies my halberd on the floor;
 And he that steps my halberd o'er,
 To do the maid injurious part,
 My shaft shall quiver in his heart!—
 Beware loose speech, or jesting rough:
 Ye all know John de Brent. Enough.”

IX.

Their Captain came, a gallant young.—
 (Of Tullibardine's house he sprung,)

Nor wore he yet the spurs of knight;
 Gay was his mien, his humour light,
 And, though by courtesy controll'd,
 Forward his speech, his bearing bold.
 The high-born maiden ill could brook
 The scanning of his curious look
 And dauntless eye:—and yet, in sooth,
 Young Lewis was a generous youth;
 But Ellen's lovely face and mien,
 Ill suited to the garb and scene,
 Might lightly bear construction strange.
 And give loose fancy scope to range.
 "Welcome to Stirling towers, fair maid!
 Come ye to seek a champion's aid,
 On palfrey white, with harper hoar,
 Like errant damosel of yore?
 Does thy high quest a knight require,
 Or may the venture suit a squire?"—
 Her dark eye flash'd;—she paused and sigh'd,—
 "O what have I to do with pride!—
 Through scenes of sorrow, shame, and strife,
 A suppliant for a father's life,
 I crave an audience of the King.
 Behold, to back my suit, a ring,
 The royal pledge of grateful claims,
 Given by the monarch to Fitz-James."

X.

The signet-ring young Lewis took,
 With deep respect and alter'd look;
 And said—"This ring our duties own
 And pardon, if to worth unknown,
 In semblance mean obscurely veil'd,
 Lady, in aught my folly fail'd.
 Soon as the day flings wide his gates,
 The King shall know what suitor waits.
 Please you, meanwhile, in fitting bower
 Repose you till his waking hour;
 Female attendance shall obey
 Your hest, for service or array.
 Permit I marshal you the way."
 But, ere she follow'd, with the grace
 And open bounty of her race,
 She bade her slender purse be shared
 Among the soldiers of the guard.
 The rest with thanks their guerdon took;
 But Brent, with shy and awkward look,
 On the reluctant maiden's hold
 Forced bluntly back the proffer'd gold;—
 "Forgive a haughty English heart,
 And O forget its ruder part!
 The vacant purse shall be my share,
 Which in my barret-cap I'll bear,
 Perchance in jeopardy of war,
 Where gayer crests may keep afar."

With thanks—'twas all she could—the 'naid
His rugged courtesy repaid.

XI.

When Ellen forth with Lewis went,
Allan made suit to John of Brent :—
" My lady safe, O let your grace
Give me to see my master's face !
His minstrel I,—to share his doom
Bound from the cradle to the tomb.
Tenth in descent, since first my sires
Waked for his noble house their lyres,
Nor one of all the race was known
But prized its weal above their own.
With the Chief's birth begins our care,
Our harp must soothe the infant heir,
Teach the youth tales of fight, and grace
His earliest feat of field or chase ;
In peace, in war, our rank we keep,
We cheer his board, we soothe his sleep,
Nor leave him till we pour our verse—
A doleful tribute !—o'er his hearse.
Then let me share his captive lot ;
It is my right—deny it not !"—
" Little we reck," said John of Brent,
" We Southern men, of long descent ;
Nor wot we how a name—a word—
Makes clansmen vassals to a lord :
Yet kind my noble landlord's part,—
God bless the house of Beaudesert !
And, but I loved to drive the deer,
More than to guide the labouring steer,
I had not dwelt an outcast here.
Come, good old Minstrel, follow me ;
Thy Lord and Chieftain shalt thou see."

XII.

Then, from a rusted iron hook,
A bunch of ponderous keys he took,
Lighted a torch, and Allan led
Through grated arch and passage dread.
Portals they pass'd, where, deep within,
Spoke prisoner's moan, and fetters' din ;
Through rugged vaults, where, loosely stored,
Lay wheel, and axe, and headsman's sword,
And many a hideous engine grim,
For wrenching joint, and crushing limb,
By artist form'd who deem'd it shame
And sin to give their work a name.
They halted at a low-brow'd porch,
And Brent to Allan gave the torch,
While bolt and chain he backward roll'd,
And made the bar unhasp its hold.
They enter'd :—'twas a prison-room
Of stern security and gloom.

Yet not a dungeon; for the day
Through lofty gratings found its way,
And rude and antique garniture
Deck'd the sad walls and oaken floor;
Such as the rugged days of old
Deem'd fit for captive noble's hold.
"Here," said De Brent, "thou mayest remain
Till the Leech visit him again.
Strict is his charge, the warders tell,
To tend the noble prisoner well."
Retiring then, the bolt he drew,
And the lock's murmurs growl'd anew.
Roused at the sound, from lowly bed
A captive feebly raised his head;
The wondering Minstrel look'd, and knew--
Not his dear lord, but Roderick Dhu!
For, come from where Clan-Alpine fought,
They, erring, deem'd the Chief he sought.

XIII.

As the tall ship, whose lofty prone
Shall never stem the billows more,
Deserted by her gallant band,
Amid the breakers lies astrand,—
So, on his couch, lay Roderick Dhu!
And oft his fever'd limbs he threw
In toss abrupt, as when her sides
Lie rocking in the advancing tides,
That shake her frame with ceaseless beat,
Yet cannot heave her from the seat;—
O! how unlike her course at sea!
Or his free step on hill and lea!—
Soon as the Minstrel he could scan,
"What of thy lady?—of my clan?—
My mother?—Douglas?—tell me all?
Have they been ruin'd in my fall?
Ah, yes! or wherefore art thou here?
Yet speak,—speak boldly,—do not feal."—
(For Allan, who his mood well knew,
Was choked with grief and terror too.)
"Who fought?—who fled?—Old man, be brief;—
Some might—for they had lost their Chief.
Who basely live?—who bravely died?"—
"O, calm thee, Chief!" the Minstrel cried;
"Ellen is safe;"—"For that, thank Heaven!"—
"And hopes are for the Douglas given;—
The Lady Margaret, too, is well;
And, for thy clan,—on field or fell,
Has never harp of minstrel told
Of combat fought so true and bold.
Thy stately Fine is yet unbent,
Though many a goodly bow is rent."

XIV.

The Chieftain rear'd his form on high,
And fever's fire was in his eye;

But ghastly, pale, and livid streaks
 Chequer'd his swarthy brow and cheeks.
 —“Hark, Minstrel! I have heard thee play,
 With measure bold on festal day,
 In yon lone isle, . . . again where ne'er
 Shall harper play, or warrior hear! . . .
 That stirring air that peals on high,
 O'er Dermid's race our victory.—
 Strike it!⁵⁰—and then, (for well thou canst,)
 Free from thy minstrel-spirit glanced,
 Fling me the picture of the fight,
 When met my clan the Saxon might.
 I'll listen, till my fancy hears
 The clang of swords, the crash of spears!
 These grates, these walls, shall vanish then,
 For the fair field of fighting men,
 And my free spirit burst away,
 As if it soar'd from battle fray.”
 The trembling Bard with awe obey'd,—
 Slow on the harp his hand he laid;
 But soon remembrance of the sight
 He witness'd from the mountain's height,
 With what old Bertram told at night,
 Awaken'd the full power of song,
 And bore him in career along;—
 As shallop launch'd on river's tide,
 That slow and fearful leaves the side,
 But, when it feels the middle stream,
 Drives downward swift as lightning's beam.

XV.

Battle of Beal' an Duine.⁵¹

“The Minstrel came once more to view
 The eastern ridge of Benvenue,
 For ere he parted, he would say
 Farewell to lovely Loch Achray—
 Where shall he find, in foreign land,
 So lone a lake, so sweet a strand!
 There is no breeze upon the fern,
 Nor ripple on the lake,
 Upon her eyry nods the erne,
 The deer has sought the brake;
 The small birds will not sing aloud,
 The springing trout lies still,
 So darkly glooms yon thunder cloud,
 That swathes, as with a purple shroud,
 Benledi's distant hill.
 Is it the thunder's solemn sound
 That mutters deep and dread,
 Or echoes from the groaning ground
 The warrior's measured tread?
 Is it the lightning's quivering glance
 That on the thicket streams,
 Or do they flash on spear and lance
 The sun's retiring beams?

—I see the dagger-crest of Mar,
 I see the Moray's silver star,
 Wave o'er the cloud of Saxon war,
 That up the lake comes winding far!
 To hero bound for battle-strife,
 Or bard of martial lay,
 'T were worth ten years of peaceful life,
 One glance at their array!

XVI.

" Their light-arm'd archers far and near
 Survey'd the tangled ground;
 Their centre ranks, with pike and spear,
 A twilight forest frown'd;
 Their barbed horsemen, in the rear,
 The stern battalia crown'd.
 No cymbal clash'd, no clarion rang,
 Still were the pipe and drum;
 Save heavy tread, and armour's clang,
 The sullen march was dumb.
 There breathed no wind their crests to shake,
 Or wave their flags abroad;
 Scarce the frail aspen seem'd to quake,
 That shadow'd o'er their road.
 Their vanward scouts no tidings bring,
 Can rouse no lurking foe,
 Nor spy a trace of living thing,
 Save when they stirr'd the roe;
 The host moves like a deep-sea wave,
 Where rise no rocks its pride to brave,
 High-swelling, dark, and slow.
 The lake is pass'd, and now they gain
 A narrow and a broken plain,
 Before the Trosachs' rugged jaws;
 And here the horse and spearmen pause,
 While, to explore the dangerous glen,
 Dive through the pass the archer-men.

XVII.

* At once there rose so wild a yell
 Within that dark and narrow dell,
 As all the fiends, from heaven that fell,
 Had peal'd the banner-cry of hell!
 Forth from the pass in tumult driven,
 Like chaff before the wind of heaven,
 The archery appear;
 For life! for life! their plight they ply—
 And shriek, and shout, and battle-cry:
 And plaids and bonnets waving high,
 And broadswords flashing to the sky,
 Are maddening in the rear.
 Onward they drive, in dreadful race,
 Pursuers and pursued;
 Before that tide of flight and chase,

How shall it keep its rooted place,
 The spearmen's twilight wood?—
 'Down, down,' cried Mar, 'your lances down!
 Bear back both friend and foe!—
 Like reeds before the tempest's frown,
 That serried grove of lances brown
 At once lay levell'd low;
 And closely shouldering side to side,
 The bristling ranks the onset bide.—
 We'll quell the savage mountaineer,
 As their Tinchel^a cows the game!
 They comè as fleet as forest deer,
 We'll drive them back as tame.'

XVIII.

" Bearing before them, in their course,
 The relics of the archer force,
 Like wave with crest of sparkling foam,
 Right onward did Clan-Alpine come.
 Above the tide, each broadsword bright
 Was brandishing like beam of light,
 Each targe was dark below;
 And with the ocean's mighty swing,
 When heaving to the tempest's wing,
 They hurl'd them on the foe.
 I heard the lance's shivering crash,
 As when the whirlwind rends the ash;
 I heard the broadsword's deadly clang,
 As if an hundred anvils rang!
 But Moray wheel'd his rearward rank
 Of horsemen on Clan-Alpine's flank,
 —' My banner-man, advance!
 I see,' he cried, ' their column shake.—
 Now, gallants! for your ladies' sake,
 Upon them with the lance! '—
 The horsemen dash'd among the rout,
 As deer break through the broom;
 Their steeds are stout, their swords are out,
 They soon make lightsome room.
 Clan-Alpine's best are backward borne—
 Where, where was Roderick then?
 One blast upon his bugle-horn
 Were worth a thousand men!
 And reflux through the pass of fear
 The battle's tide was pour'd;
 Vanish'd the Saxon's struggling spear,
 Vanish'd the mountain-sword.
 As Bracklinn's chasm, so black and steep,
 Receives her roaring linn,
 As the dark caverns of the deep
 Suck the wild whirlpool in,

^a A circle of sportsmen, who, by surrounding a great space, and gradually narrowing, brought immense quantities of deer together, which usually made desperate efforts to break through the *Tinchel*.

So did the deep and darksome pass
 Devour the battle's mingled mass:
 None linger now upon the plain,
 Save those who ne'er shall fight again.

XIX.

"Now westward rolls the battle's din,
 That deep and doubling pass within,
 —Minstrel, away! the work of fate
 Is bearing on: its issue wait,
 Where the rude Trosachs' dread defile
 Opens on Katrine's lake and isle.
 Grey Benvenue I soon repass'd,
 Loch Katrine lay beneath me cast.
 The sun is set;—the clouds are met,
 The lowering scowl of heaven
 An inky hue of vivid blue
 To the deep lake has given;
 Strange gusts of wind from mountain-glen
 Swept o'er the lake, then sunk agen.
 I heeded not the eddying surge,
 Mine eye but saw the Trosachs' gorge,
 Mine ear but heard the sullen sound,
 Which like an earthquake shook the ground,
 And spoke the stern and desperate strife
 That parts not but with parting life,
 Seeming, to minstrel ear, to toll
 The dirge of many a passing soul.
 Nearer it comes—the dim-wood glen
 The martial flood disgorged agen,
 But not in mingled tide:
 The plaided warriors of the North
 High on the mountain thunder forth
 And overhang its side;
 While by the lake below appears
 The dark'ning cloud of Saxon spears.
 At weary bay each shatter'd band,
 Eyeing their foemen, sternly stand;
 Their banners stream like tatter'd sail,
 That flings its fragments to the gale,
 And broken arms and disarray
 Mark'd the fell havoc of the day.

XX.

"Viewing the mountain's ridge askance,
 The Saxon stood in sullen trance,
 Till Moray pointed with his lance,
 And cried—"Behold yon isle!—
 See! none are left to guard its strand,
 But women weak, that wring the hand:
 'Tis there of yore the robber band
 Their booty wont to pile;—
 My purse, with bonnet-pieces store,
 To him will swim a bow-shot o'er,
 And loose a shallop from the shore.

Lightly we'll tame the war-wolf then,
 Lords of his mate, and brood, and den.—
 Forth from the ranks a spearman sprung,
 On earth his casque and corslet rung,
 He plunged him in the wave:—
 All saw the deed—the purpose knew,
 And to their clamours Benvenue
 A mingled echo gave;
 The Saxons shout, their mate to cheer,
 The helpless females scream for fear,
 And yells for rage the mountaineer.
 'Twas then, as by the outcry riven,
 Pour'd down at once the lowering heaven;
 A whirlwind swept Loch Katrine's breast,
 Her billows rear'd their snowy crest.
 Well for the swimmer swell'd they high,
 To mar the Highland marksman's eye;
 For round him shower'd, 'mid rain and hail,
 The vengeful arrows of the Gael.—
 In vain—He nears the isle—and lo!
 His hand is on a shallop's bow.
 —Just then a flash of lightning came,
 It tinged the waves and strand with flame;—
 I mark'd Duncraggan's widow'd dame—
 Behind an oak I saw her stand,
 A naked dirk gleam'd in her hand:
 It darken'd,—but, amid the moan
 Of waves, I heard a dying groan;
 Another flash!—the spearman floats
 A weltering corse beside the boats,
 And the stern matron o'er him stood,
 Her hand and dagger streaming blood.

XXI.

“‘Revenge! revenge!’ the Saxons cried—
 The Gael's exulting shout replied.
 Despite the elemental rage,
 Again they hurried to engage;
 But, ere they closed in desperate fight,
 Bloody with spurring came a knight,
 Sprung from his horse, and, from a crag,
 Waved 'twixt the hosts a milk-white flag.
 Clarion and trumpet by his side
 Rung forth a truce-note high and wide,
 While, in the Monarch's name, afar
 An herald's voice forbade the war,
 For Bothwell's lord, and Roderick bold,
 Were both, he said, in captive hold.”—
 —But here the lay made sudden stand!—
 The harp escaped the Minstrel's hand!—
 Oft had he stolen a glance, to spy
 How Roderick brook'd his minstrelsy:
 At first, the Chieftain, to the chime,
 With lifted hand, kept feeble time;

That motion ceased,—yet feeling strong
Varied his look as changed the song;
At length, no more his deafen'd ear
The minstrel melody can hear;
His face grows sharp,—his hands are clench'd,
As if some pang his heart-strings wrench'd;
Set are his teeth, his fading eye
Is sternly fix'd on vacancy;
Thus, motionless, and moanless, drew
His parting breath, stout Roderick Dhu!—
Old Allan-Bane look'd on aghast,
While grim and still his spirit pass'd:
But when he saw that life was fled,
He pour'd his wailing o'er the dead.

XXII.

Lament.

“And art thou cold and lowly laid,
Thy foemen's dread, thy people's aid,
Breadalbane's boast, Clan-Alpine's shade
For thee shall none a requiem say?
—For thee,—who loved the minstrel's lay
For thee, of Bothwell's house the stay,
The shelter of her exiled line,
E'en in this prison-house of thine,
I'll wail for Alpine's honour'd Pine!

“What groans shall yonder valleys fill!
What shrieks of grief shall rend yon hill
What tears of burning rage shall thrill,
When mourns thy tribe thy battles done,
Thy fall before the race was won,
Thy sword ungirt ere set of sun!
There breathes not clansman of thy line,
But would have given his life for thine.—
O woe for Alpine's honour'd Pine!

“Sad was thy lot on mortal stage!—
The captive thrush may brook the cage,
The prison'd eagle dies for rage.
Brave spirit, do not scorn my strain!
And, when its notes awake again,
Even she, so long beloved in vain,
Shall with my harp her voice combine,
And mix her woe and tears with mine,
To wail Clan-Alpine's honour'd Pine.”—

XXIII.

Ellen, the while, with bursting heart,
Remain'd in lordly bower apart,
Where play'd, with many-coloured gleams,
Through storied pane the rising beams.
In vain on gilded roof they fall,
And lighten'd up a tapestried wall,

And for her use a menial train
 A rich collation spread in vain.
 The banquet proud, the chamber gay,
 Scarce drew one curious glance astray;
 Or if she look'd 'twas but to say,
 With better omen dawn'd the day
 In that lone isle, where waved on high
 The dun-deer's hide for canopy;
 Where oft her noble father shared
 The simple meal her care prepared,
 While Lufra, crouching by her side,
 Her station claim'd with jealous pride,
 And Douglas, bent on woodland game,
 Spoke of the chase to Malcolm Græme,
 Whose answer, oft at random made,
 The wandering of his thoughts betray'd.—
 Those who such simple joys have known,
 Are taught to prize them when they're gone.
 But sudden, see, she lifts her head!
 The window seeks with cautious tread.
 What distant music has the power
 To win her in this woful hour!
 'T was from a turret that o'erhung
 Her latticed bower, the strain was sung.

XXIV.

Lay of the Imprisoned Huntsman.

"My hawk is tired of perch and hood,
 My idle greyhound loathes his food,
 My horse is weary of his stall,
 And I am sick of captive thrall.
 I wish I were, as I have been,
 Hunting the hart in forest green,
 With bended bow and bloodhound free,
 For that's the life is meet for me.
 I hate to learn the ebb of time,
 From yon dull steeple's drowsy chime,
 Or mark it as the sunbeams crawl,
 Inch after inch, along the wall.
 The lark was wont my matins ring,
 The sable rook my vespers sing;
 These towers, although a king's they be,
 Have not a hall of joy for me.
 No more at dawning morn I rise,
 And sun myself in Ellen's eyes,
 Drive the fleet deer the forest through,
 And homeward wend with evening dew;
 A blithesome welcome blithely meet,
 And lay my trophies at her feet,
 While fled the eve on wing of glee,—
 That life is lost to love and me!"

XXV.

The heart-sick lay was hardly said,
 The list'ner had not turn'd her head,

It trickled still, the starting tear,
 When light a footstep struck her ear,
 And Snowdown's graceful Knight was near.
 She turn'd the hastier, lest again
 The prisoner should renew his strain.—
 "O welcome, brave Fitz-James!" she said;
 "How may an almost orphan maid
 Pay the deep debt"——"O say not so!
 To me no gratitude you owe.
 Not mine, alas! the boon to give,
 And bid thy noble father live;
 I can but be thy guide, sweet maid,
 With Scotland's King thy suit to aid.
 No tyrant he, though ire and pride
 May lay his better mood aside.
 Come, Ellen, come! 'tis more than time—
 He holds his court at morning prime."
 With beating heart, and bosom wrung,
 As to a brother's arm she clung:
 Gently he dried the falling tear,
 And gently whisper'd hope and cheer;
 Her faltering steps half led, half staid,
 Through gallery fair, and high arcade,
 Till, at his touch, its wings of pride
 A portal arch unfolded wide.

XXVI.

Within 't was brilliant all and light,
 A thronging scene of figures bright;
 It glow'd on Ellen's dazzled sight,
 As when the setting sun has given
 Ten thousand hues to summer even,
 And from their tissue, fancy frames
 Aerial knights and fairy dames.
 Still by Fitz-James her footing staid;
 A few faint steps she forward made,
 Then slow her drooping head she raised,
 And fearful round the presence gazed;
 For him she sought, who own'd this state,
 The dreaded Prince, whose will was fate.
 She gazed on many a princely port,
 Might well have ruled a royal court;
 On many a splendid garb she gazed,
 Then turn'd bewilder'd and amazed,
 For all stood bare; and, in the room,
 Fitz-James alone wore cap and plume.
 To him each lady's look was lent;
 On him each courtier's eye was bent;
 Midst furs, and silks, and jewels sheen,
 He stood, in simple Lincoln green,
 The centre of the glittering ring,—
 And Snowdown's Knight is Scotland's King!⁵¹

XXVII.

As wreath of snow, on mountain-breast,
 Slides from the rock that gave it rest,

Poor Ellen glided from her stay,
 And at the Monarch's feet she lay
 No word her choking voice commands,—
 She show'd the ring—she clasp'd her hands.
 O! not a moment could he brook,
 The generous Prince, that suppliant look!
 Gently he raised her; and, the while,
 Check'd with a glance the circle's smile;
 Graceful, but grave, her brow he kiss'd,
 And bade her terrors be dismiss'd:—
 "Yes, Fair; the wandering poor Fitz-James
 The fealty of Scotland claims.
 To him thy woes, thy wishes, bring;
 He will redeem his signet ring.
 Ask nought for Douglas; yester even,
 His Prince and he have much forgiven:
 Wrong hath he had from slanderous tongue—
 I, from his rebel kinsmen, wrong.
 We would not, to the vulgar crowd,
 Yield what they craved with clamour loud;
 Calmly we heard and judged his cause,
 Our council aided, and our laws.
 I stanch'd thy father's death-feud stern
 With stout De Vaux and Grey Glencairn;
 And Bothwell's Lord henceforth we own
 The friend and bulwark of our Throne.—
 But, lovely infidel, how now?
 What clouds thy misbelieving brow?
 Lord James of Douglas, lend thine aid:
 Thou must confirm this doubting maid."

XXVIII.

Then forth the noble Douglas sprung,
 And on his neck his daughter hung.
 The monarch drank, that happy hour,
 The sweetest, holiest draught of Power,—
 When it can say, with godlike voice,
 Arise, sad Virtue, and rejoice!
 Yet would not James the general eye
 On Nature's raptures long should pry;
 He stepp'd between—"Nay, Douglas, nay
 Steal not my proselyte away!
 The riddle 'tis my right to read,
 That brought this happy chance to speed.
 Yes, Ellen, when disguised I stray
 In life's more low but happier way,
 'Tis under name which veils my power;
 Nor falsely veils—for Stirling's tower
 Of yore the name of Snowdown claims,"⁵⁵
 And Normans call me James Fitz-James.
 Thus watch I o'er insulted laws,
 Thus learn to right the injured cause."—
 Then, in a tone apart and low,—
 "Ah, little traitress! none must know
 What idle dream, what lighter thought,
 What vanity full dearly bought,

Join'd to thine eye's dark witchcraft, drew
My spell-bound steps to Benvenue,
In dangerous hour, and all but gave
Thy monarch's life to mountain glaive : —
Aloud he spoke — "Thou still dost hold
That little talisman of gold,
Pledge of my faith, Fitz-James' ring —
What seeks fair Ellen of the King ?"

XXIX.

Full well the conscious maiden guess'd
He probed the weakness of her breast ;
But, with that consciousness, there came
A lightening of her fears for Græme,
And more she deem'd the monarch's ire
Kindled 'gainst him, who for her sire,
Rebelious broadsword boldly drew ;
And, to her generous feeling true,
She craved the grace of Roderick Dhu.
"Forbear thy suit : — the King of kings
Alone can stay life's parting wings :
I know his heart, I know his hand,
Have shared his cheer, and proved his brand —
My fairest earldom would I give
To bid Clan Alpine's Chieftain live ! —
Hast thou no other boon to crave ?
No other captive friend to save ?"
Blushing, she turn'd her from the King,
And to the Douglas gave the ring,
As if she wish'd her sire to speak
The suit that stain'd her glowing cheek. —
"Nay, then, my pledge has lost its force,
And stubborn justice holds her course. —
Malcolm, come forth !" — and, at the word,
Down kneel'd the Græme to Scotland's Lord.
"For thee, rash youth, no suppliant sues,
From thee may Vengeance claim her dues,
Who, nurtured underneath our smile,
Hast paid our care by treacherous wile,
And sought, amid thy faithful clan,
A refuge for an outlaw'd man,
Dishonouring thus thy loyal name. —
Fetters and warder for the Græme !" — — —
His chain of gold the King unstrung,
The links o'er Malcolm's neck he flung,
Then gently drew the glittering band,
And laid the clasp on Ellen's hand.

HARP of the North, farewell! The hills grow dark,
On purple peaks a deeper shade descending;
In twilight copse the glow-worm lights her spark,
The deer, half-seen, are to the covert wending.
Resume thy wizard elm! the fountain lending,
And the wild breeze, thy wilder minstrelsy;
Thy numbers sweet with nature's vespers blending,
With distant echo from the fold and lea,
And herd-boy's evening pipe, and hum of housing bee.

Yet, once again, farewell, thou Minstrel harp!
Yet, once again, forgive my feeble sway!
And little reck I of the censure sharp
May idly cavil at an idle lay.
Much have I owed thy strains on life's long way,
Through secret woes the world has never known,
When on the weary night dawn'd wearier day,
And bitterer was the grief devour'd alone.
That I o'erlived such woes, Enchantress! is thine own.

Hark! as my lingering footsteps slow retire,
Some Spirit of the Air has waked thy string!
'Tis now a seraph bold, with touch of fire—
'Tis now the brush of Fairy's frolic wing;—
Receding now, the dying numbers ring
Fainter and fainter down the rugged dell—
And now the mountain breezes scarcely bring
A wandering witch-note of the distant spell—
And now, 'tis silent all!—Enchantress, fare thee well!



THE
VISION OF DON RODERICK.



Quid dignum memorare tuis, Hispania, terris,
Vox humana valet! ————— CLAUDIAN.

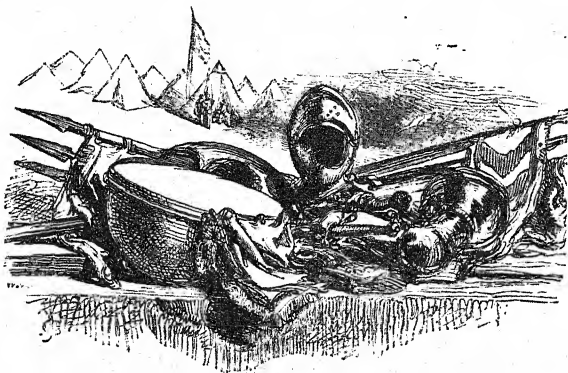
TO
JOHN WHITMORE, Esq.

AND TO THE
COMMITTEE OF SUBSCRIBERS
FOR RELIEF OF THE PORTUGUESE SUFFERERS.

IN WHICH HE PRESIDES,

THIS POEM,
THE VISION OF DON RODERICK,
COMPOSED FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE FUND UNDER THEIR MANAGEMENT
IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

BY
WALTER SCOTT.



PREFACE.

THE following Poem is founded upon a Spanish Tradition, particularly detailed in the Notes; but bearing, in general, that Don Roderick, the last Gothic King of Spain, when the Invasion of the Moors was impending, had the temerity to descend into an ancient vault, near Toledo, the opening of which had been denounced as fatal to the Spanish Monarchy. The legend adds, that his rash curiosity was mortified by an emblematical representation of those Saracens who, in the year 714, defeated him in battle, and reduced Spain under their dominion. I have presumed to prolong the Vision of the Revolutions of Spain down to the present eventful crisis of the Peninsula; and to divide it, by a supposed change of scene, into THREE PERIODS. The FIRST of these represents the Invasion of the Moors, the Defeat and Death of Roderick, and closes with the peaceful occupation of the country by the Victors. The SECOND PERIOD embraces the state of the Peninsula, when the conquests of the Spaniards and Portuguese in the East and West Indies had raised to the highest pitch the renown of their arms; sullied, however, by superstition and cruelty. An allusion to the inhumanities of the Inquisition terminates this picture. The LAST PART of the Poem opens with the state of Spain previous to the unparalleled treachery of BUONAPARTE; gives a sketch of the usurpation attempted upon that unsuspecting and friendly kingdom, and terminates with the arrival of the British succours. It may be further proper to mention, that the object of the Poem is less to commemorate or detail particular incidents, than to exhibit a general and impressive picture of the several periods brought upon the stage.

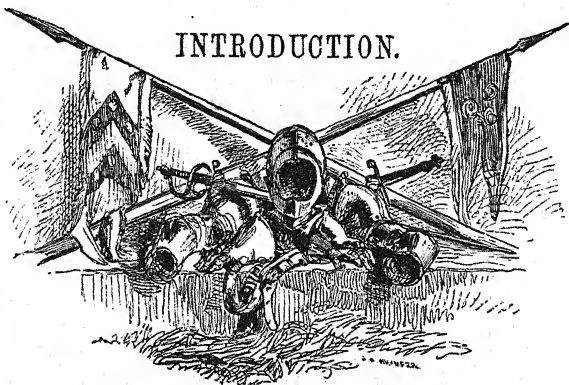
I am too sensible of the respect due to the Public, especially by one who has already experienced more than ordinary indulgence, to offer any apology for the inferiority of the poetry to the

subject it is chiefly designed to commemorate. Yet I think it proper to mention, that while I was hastily executing a work, written for a temporary purpose, and on passing events, the task was most cruelly interrupted by the successive deaths of LORD PRESIDENT BLAIR, and LORD VISCOUNT MELVILLE. In those distinguished characters, I had not only to regret persons whose lives were most important to Scotland, but also whose notice and patronage honoured my entrance upon active life; and, I may add, with melancholy pride, who permitted my more advanced age to claim no common share in their friendship. Under such interruptions, the following verses, which my best and happiest efforts must have left far unworthy of their theme, have, I am myself sensible, an appearance of negligence and incoherence, which, in other circumstances, I might have been able to remove.

EDINBURGH, *June 24, 1811.*



INTRODUCTION.



LIVES there a strain, whose sounds of mounting fire
 May rise distinguished o'er the din of war;
 Or died it with yon Master of the Lyre,
 Who sung beleaguer'd Ilion's evil star?
 Such, WELLINGTON, might reach thee from afar,
 Wafting its descant wide o'er Ocean's range;
 Nor shouts, nor clashing arms, its mood could mar,
 All as it swell'd 'twixt each loud trumpet-change,
 That clangs to Britain victory, to Portugal revenge!

II.

Yes! such a strain, with all-o'erpouring measure,
 Might melodize with each tumultuous sound,
 Each voice of fear or triumph, woe or pleasure,
 That rings Mondego's ravaged shores around;
 The thundering cry of hosts with conquest crown'd,
 The female shriek, the ruin'd peasant's moan,
 The shout of captives from their chains unbound,
 The foil'd oppressor's deep and sullen groan,
 A Nation's choral hymn for tyranny o'erthrown.

III.

But we, weak minstrels of a laggard day,
 Skill'd but to imitate an elder page,
 Timid and raptureless, can we repay
 The debt thou claim'st in this exhausted age?
 Thou givest our lyres a theme, that might engage
 Those that could send thy name o'er sea and land,
 While sea and land shall last; for Homer's rage
 A theme; a theme for Milton's mighty hand—
 How much unmeet for us, a faint degenerate band!

IV.

Ye mountains stern! within whose rugged breast
 The friends of Scottish freedom found repose

Ye torrents! whose hoarse sounds have soothed their rest,
 Returning from the field of vanquish'd foes;
 Say, have ye lost each wild majestic close,
 That erst the choir of Bards or Druids flung,
 What time their hymn of victory arose,
 And Cattraeth's glens with voice of triumph rung,
 And mystic Merlin harp'd, and grey-hair'd Llywarch sung!¹

V.

O! if your wilds such minstrelsy retain,
 As sure your changeful gales seem oft to say
 When sweeping wild, and sinking soft again,
 Like trumpet-jubilee, or harp's wild sway;
 If ye can echo such triumphant lay,
 'Then lend the note to him has loved you long!
 Who pious gather'd each tradition grey,
 That floats your solitary wastes along,
 And with affection vain gave them new voice in song.

VI.

For not till now, how oft soe'er the task
 Of truant verse hath lighten'd graver care,
 From Muse or Sylvan was he wont to ask,
 In phrase poetic, inspiration fair;
 Careless he gave his numbers to the air,
 They came unsought for, if applauses came;
 Nor for himself prefers he now the prayer;
 Let but his verse befit a hero's fame,
 Immortal be the verse!—forgot the poet's name!

VII.

Hark, from yon misty cairn their answer tost:
 "Minstrel! the fame of whose romantic lyre,
 Capricious-swelling now, may soon be lost,
 Like the light flickering of a cottage fire;
 If to such task presumptuous thou aspire,
 Seek not from us the meed to warrior due:
 Age after age has gather'd son to sire,
 Since our grey cliffs the din of conflict knew,
 Or, pealing through our vales, victorious bugles blew.

VIII.

"Decay'd our old traditionary lore,
 Save where the lingering fays renew their ring,
 By milk-maid seen beneath the hawthorn hoar,
 Or round the marge of Minchmore's haunted spring;²
 Save where their legends grey-hair'd shepherds sing,
 That now scarce win a listening ear but thine,
 Of feuds obscure, and Border ravaging,
 And rugged deeds recount in rugged line,
 Of moonlight foray made on Teviet, Tweed, or Tyne.

¹ See Note I of the "NOTES TO THE VISION OF DON RODERICK" in the Appendix. The figures of reference throughout the poem relate to further Notes in the Appendix.

IX.

"No! search romantic lands, where the near Sun
 Gives with unstinted boon ethereal flame,
 Where the rude villager, his labour done,
 In verse spontaneous³ chants some favour'd name;
 Whether Olalia's charms his tribute claim,
 Her eye of diamond, and her locks of jet;
 Or whether, kindling at the deeds of Græme,⁴
 He sing, to wild Morisco measure set,
 Old Albin's red claymore, green Erin's bayonet!

X.

"Explore those regions, where the flinty crest
 Of wild Nevada ever gleams with snows,
 Where in the proud Alhambra's ruin'd breast
 Barbaric monuments of pomp repose;
 Or where the banners of more ruthless foes
 Than the fierce Moor, float o'er Toledo's fane,
 From whose tall towers even now the patriot throws
 An anxious glance, to spy upon the plain
 The blended ranks of England, Portugal, and Spain.

XI.

"There, of Numantian fire a swarthy spark
 Still lightens in the sunburnt native's eye;
 The stately port, slow step, and visage dark,
 Still mark enduring pride and constancy.
 And, if the glow of feudal chivalry
 Beam not, as once, thy nobles' dearest pride,
 Iberia! oft thy crestless peasantry
 Have seen the plumed Hidalgo quit their side,
 Have seen, yet dauntless stood—'gainst fortune fought and
 died.

XII.

"And cherish'd still by that unchanging race,
 Are themes for minstrelsy more high than thine;
 Of strange tradition many a mystic trace,
 Legend and vision, prophesy and sign;
 Where wonders wild of Arabesque combine
 With Gothic imagery of darker shade,
 Forming a model meet for minstrel line.—
 Go, seek such theme!"—The Mountain Spirit said:
 With filial awe I heard—I heard, and I obeyed.

THE VISION OF DON RODERICK.

I.

REARING their crests amid the cloudless skies,
 And darkly clustering in the pale moonlight,
 Toledo's holy towers and spires arise,
 As from a trembling lake of silver white;
 Their mingled shadows intercept the sight
 Of the broad burial-ground outstretch'd below,
 And nought disturbs the silence of the night;
 All sleeps in sullen shade, or silver glow,
 All save the heavy swell of Teio's ceaseless flow.

II.

All save the rushing swell of Teio's tide,
 Or, distant heard, a courser's neigh or tramp;
 Their changing rounds as watchful horsemen ride,
 To guard the limits of King Roderick's camp:
 For, through the river's night-fog rolling damp,
 Was many a proud pavilion dimly seen,
 Which glimmer'd back, against the moon's fair lamp,
 Tissues of silk and silver twisted sheen,
 And standards proudly pitch'd, and warders arm'd between.

III.

But of their Monarch's person keeping ward,
 Since last the deep-mouth'd bell of vespers toll'd,
 The chosen soldiers of the royal guard
 The post beneath the proud Cathedral hold:
 A band unlike their Gothic sires of old,
 Who, for the cap of steel and iron mace,
 Bear slender darts, and casques bedeck'd with gold,
 While silver-studded belts their shoulders grace,
 Where ivory quivers ring in the broad falchion's place.

IV.

In the light language of an idle court,
 They murmur'd at their master's long delay,
 And held his lengthen'd orisons in sport:—
 "What! will Don Roderick here till morning stay
 To wear in shrift and prayer the night away?
 And are his hours in such dull penance past,
 For fair Florinda's plunder'd charms to pay?"—
 Then to the east their weary eyes they cast,
 And wish'd the lingering dawn would glimmer forth at last.

V.

But, far within, Toledo's Prelate lent
 An ear of fearful wonder to the King;
 The silver lamp a fitful lustre sent,
 So long that sad confession witnessing:
 For Roderick told of many a hidden thing,
 Such as are lothly utter'd to the air,
 When Fear, Remorse, and Shame, the bosom wring,
 And Guilt his secret burden cannot bear,
 And Conscience seeks in speech a respite from Despair.

VI.

Full on the Prelate's face, and silver hair,
 The stream of failing light was feebly roll'd:
 But Roderick's visage, though his head was bare,
 Was shadow'd by his hand and mantle's fold.
 While of his hidden soul the sins he told,
 Proud Alaric's descendant could not brook,
 That mortal man his bearing should behold,
 Or boast that he had seen, when Conscience shook,
 Fear tame a monarch's brow, Remorse a warrior's look.

VII.

The old man's faded cheek wax'd yet more pale,
 As many a secret sad the King bewray'd;
 As sign and glance eked out the unfinish'd tale,
 When in the midst his faltering whisper staid.—
 "Thus royal Witiza was slain,"—he said;
 "Yet, holy Father, deem not it was I."
 Thus still Ambition strives her crimes to shade.—
 "Oh! rather deem 'twas stern necessity!
 Self-preservation bade, and I must kill or die.

VIII.

"And if Florinda's shrieks alarm'd the air,
 If she invoked her absent sire in vain,
 And on her knees implored that I would spare,
 Yet, reverend priest, thy sentence rash refrain!—
 All is not as it seems—the female train
 Know by their bearing to disguise their mood:—"
 But Conscience here, as if in high disdain,
 Sent to the Monarch's cheek the burning blood—
 He stay'd his speech abrupt—and up the Prelate stood.

IX.

O harden'd offspring of an iron race!
 What of thy crimes, Don Roderick, shall I say?
 What alms, or prayers, or penance, can efface
 Murder's dark spot, wash treason's stain away?
 For the foul ravisher how shall I pray,
 Who, scarce repentant, makes his crime his boast?
 How hope Almighty vengeance shall delay,
 Unless in mercy to yon Christian host,
 He spare the shepherd, lest the guiltless sheep be lost?"

X.

Then kindled the dark Tyrant in his mood,
And to his brow return'd its dauntless gloom :
"And welcome then," he cried, "be blood for blood,
For treason treachery, for dishonour doom !
Yet will I know whence come they, or by whom.
Show, for thou canst—give forth the fated key,
And guide me, Priest, to that mysterious room,
Where, if aught true in old tradition be,
His nation's future fates a Spanish King shall see."—

XI.

"Ill-fated Prince! recall the desperate word,
Or pause ere yet the omen thou obey !
Bethink, yon spell-bound portal would afford
Never to former Monarch entrance-way ;
Nor shall it ever ope, old records say,
Save to a King, the last of all his line,
What time his empire totters to decay,
And treason digs, beneath, her fatal mine,
And, high above, impends avenging wrath divine."—

XII.

"Prelate ! a Monarch's fate brooks no delay ;
Lead on !"—The ponderous key the old man took,
And held the winking lamp and led the way,
By winding stair, dark aisle, and secret nook,
Then on an ancient gateway bent his look ;
And, as the key the desperate King essay'd,
Low mutter'd thunders the Cathedral shook,
And twice he stopp'd, and twice new effort made,
Till the huge bolts roll'd back, and the loud hinges bray'd.

XIII.

Long, large, and lofty, was that vaulted hall ;
Roof, walls, and floor, were all of marble stone,
Of polish'd marble, black as funeral pall,
Carved o'er with signs and characters unknown.
A paly light, as of the dawning, shone
Through the sad bounds, but whence, they could not spy ;
For window to the upper air was none ;
Yet, by that light, Don Roderick could descry
Wonders that ne'er till then were seen by mortal eye.

XIV.

Grim sentinels, against the upper wall,
Of molten bronze, two Statues held their place ;
Massive their naked limbs, their stature tall,
Their frowning foreheads golden circles grace.
Moulded they seem'd for kings of giant race,
That lived and sinn'd before the avenging flood ;
This grasp'd a scythe, that rested on a mace ;
This spread his wings for flight, that pondering stood,
Each stubborn seem'd and stern, immutable of mood.

XV.

Fix'd was the right-hand Giant's brazen look
 Upon his brother's glass of shifting sand,
 As if its ebb he measured by a book,
 Whose iron volume loaded his huge hand;
 In which was wrote of many a fallen land,
 Of empires lost, and kings to exile driven:
 And o'er that pair their names in scroll expand—
 "Lo, DESTINY and TIME! to whom by Heaven
 The guidance of the earth is for a season given."

XVI.

Even while they read, the sand-glass wastes away;
 And, as the last and lagging grains did creep,
 That right-hand Giant 'gan his club upsway,
 As one that startles from a heavy sleep.
 Full on the upper wall the mace's sweep
 At once descended with the force of thunder,
 And hurtling down at once, in crumbled heap,
 The marble boundary was rent asunder,
 And gave to Roderick's view new sights of fear and wonder.

XVII.

For they might spy, beyond that mighty breach,
 Realms as of Spain in vision'd prospect laid,
 Castles and towers, in due proportion each,
 As by some skilful artist's hand portray'd:
 Here, crossed by many a wild Sierra's shade,
 And boundless plains that tire the traveller's eye;
 There, rich with vineyard and with olive glade,
 Or deep-embrown'd by forests huge and high,
 Or wash'd by mighty streams, that slowly murmur'd by.

XVIII.

And here, as erst upon the antique stage,
 Pass'd forth the band of masquers trimly led,
 In various forms, and various equipage,
 While fitting strains the hearer's fancy fed;
 So, to sad Roderick's eye in order spread,
 Successive pageants fill'd that mystic scene,
 Showing the fate of battles ere they bled,
 And issue of events that had not been;
 And, ever and anon, strange sounds were heard between.

XIX.

First shrill'd an unrepeat'd female shriek!—
 It seem'd as if Don Roderick knew the call,
 For the bold blood was blanching in his cheek,—
 Then answer'd kettle-drum and atabal,
 Gong-peal and cymbal-clank the ear appal,
 The Tecbir war-cry, and the Lellie's yell,⁶
 Ring wildly dissonant along the hall,
 Needs not to Roderick their dread import tell—
 "The Moor!" he cried, "the Moor!—ring out the Tocsin bell!

XX.

"They come! they come! I see the groaning lands
 White with the turbans of each Arab horde;
 Swart Zaarah joins her misbelieving bands,
 Alla and Mahomet their battle-word,
 The choice they yield, the Koran or the Sword—
 See how the Christians rush to arms again!—
 In yonder shout the voice of conflict roar'd,
 The shadowy hosts are closing on the plain—
 Now, God and Saint Iago strike, for the good cause of Spain!

XXI.

"By Heaven, the Moors prevail! the Christians yield!
 Their coward leader gives for flight the sign!
 The sceptred craven mounts to quit the field—
 Is not yon steed Orelia?—Yes, 'tis mine!'
 But never was she turn'd from battle-line:
 Lo! where the recreant spurs o'er stock and stone!
 Curses pursue the slave, and wrath divine!
 Rivers ingulph him!"—"Hush," in shuddering tone,
 The Prelate said—"rash Prince, yon vision'd form's thine own.

XXII.

Just then, a torrent cross'd the fier's course;
 The dangerous ford the Kingly Likeness tried;
 But the deep eddies whirl'd both man and horse,
 Swept like benighted peasant down the tide;
 And the proud Moslemah spread far and wide,
 As numerous as their native locust band;
 Berber and Ismael's sons the spoils divide,
 With naked scimitars mete out the land,
 And for the bondsmen base, the freeborn natives brand.

XXIII.

Then rose the grated Harem, to enclose
 The loveliest maidens of the Christian line;
 Then, menials, to their misbelieving foes,
 Castile's young nobles held forbidden wine;
 Then, too, the holy Cross, salvation's sign,
 By impious hands was from the altar thrown,
 And the deep aisles of the polluted shrine
 Echo'd, for holy hymn and organ-tone,
 The Santon's frantic dance, the Fakir's gibbering moan.

XXIV.

How fares Don Roderick?—E'en as one who spies
 Flames dart their glare o'er midnight's sable woof,
 And hears around his children's piercing cries,
 And sees the pale assistants stand aloof;
 While cruel Conscience brings him bitter proof,
 His folly or his crime have caused his grief;
 And while above him nods the crumbling roof,
 He curses earth and Heaven—himself in chief—
 Desperate of earthly aid, despairing Heaven's relief!

XXV.

That scythe-arm'd Giant turn'd his fatal glass,
 And twilight on the landscape closed her wings;
 Far to Asturian hills the war-sounds pass,
 And in their steed rebeck or timbrel rings;
 And to the sound the bell-deck'd dancer springs,
 Bazaars resound as when their marts are met,
 In tourney light the Moor his jerrid flings,
 And on the land as evening seem'd to set,
 The Imaum's chant was heard from mosque or minaret.

XXVI.

So pass'd that pageant. Ere another came,
 The visionary scene was wrapp'd in smoke,
 Whose sulph'rous wreaths were cross'd by sheets of flame :
 With every flash a bolt explosive broke,
 Till Roderick deem'd the fiends had burst their yoke,
 And waved 'gainst heaven the infernal gonfalone!
 For War a new and dreadful language spoke,
 Never by ancient warrior heard or known;
 Lightning and smoke her breath, and thunder was her tone.

XXVII.

From the dim landscape roll the clouds away—
 The Christians have regain'd their heritage;
 Before the Cross has waned the Crescent's ray,
 And many a monastery decks the stage,
 And lofty church, and low-brow'd hermitage.
 The land obeys a Hermit and a Knight,—
 The Genii those of Spain for many an age;
 This clad in sackcloth, that in armour bright,
 And that was VALOUR named, this BIGOTRY was hight.

XXVIII.

VALOUR was harness'd like a chief of old,
 Arm'd at all points, and prompt for knightly gest;
 His sword was temper'd in the Ebro cold,
 Morena's eagle plume adorn'd his crest,
 The spoils of Afric's lion bound his breast.
 Fierce he stepp'd forward and flung down his gage;
 As if of mortal kind to brave the best.
 Him follow'd his Companion, dark and sage,
 As he, my Master, sung the dangerous Archimage.

XXIX.

Haughty of heart and brow the Warrior came,
 In look and language proud as proud might be,
 Vaunting his lordship, lineage, fights, and fame :
 Yet was that barefoot Monk more proud than he;
 And as the ivy climbs the tallest tree,
 So round the loftiest soul his toils he wound,
 And with his spells subdued the fierce and free,
 Till ermined Age, and Youth in arms renoun'd,
 Honouring his scourge and haircloth, meekly kiss'd the
 ground.

XXX.

And thus it chanced that VALOUR, peerless knight,
 Who ne'er to King or Kaiser veil'd his crest,
 Victorious still in bull-feast or in fight,
 Since first his limbs with mail he did invest,
 Stoop'd ever to that Anchoret's behest;
 Nor reason'd of the right, nor of the wrong,
 But at his bidding laid the lance in rest,
 And wrought fell deeds the troubled world along,
 For he was fierce as brave, and pitiless as strong.

XXXI.

Off his proud galleys sought some new-found world,
 That latest sees the sun, or first the morn;
 Still at that Wizard's feet their spoils he hurl'd,—
 Ingots of ore from rich Potosi borne,
 Crowns by Caciques, aigrettes by Omrahs worn,
 Wrought of rare gems, but broken, rent, and foul;
 Idols of gold from heathen temples torn,
 Bedabbled all with blood.—With grisly scowl
 The Hermit marked the stains, and smiled beneath his cowl.

XXXII.

Then did he bless the offering, and bade make
 Tribute to heaven of gratitude and praise;
 And at his word the choral hymns awake,
 And many a hand the silver censer sways,
 But with the incense-breath these censers raise,
 Mix steams from corpses smouldering in the fire;
 The groans of prison'd victims mar the lays,
 And shrieks of agony confound the quire;
 While, 'mid the mingled sounds, the darken'd scenes expire.

XXXIII.

Preluding light, were strains of music heard,
 As once again revolved that measured sand;
 Such sounds as when, for sylvan dance prepared,
 Gay Xeres summons forth her vintage band;
 When for the light bolero ready stand
 The mozo blithe, with gay muchacha met,^s
 He conscious of his broider'd cap and band,
 She of her netted locks and light corsette.
 Each tiptoe perch'd to spring, and shake the castanet.

XXXIV.

And well such strains the opening scene became;
 For VALOUR had relax'd his ardent look,
 And at a lady's feet, like lion tame,
 Lay stretch'd, full loth the weight of arms to brook;
 And soften'd BIGOTRY, upon his book,
 Patter'd a task of little good or ill:
 But the blithe peasant plied his pruning-hook,
 Whistled the muleteer o'er vale and hill,
 And rung from village-green the merry seguidilla.

XXXV.

Grey Royalty, grown impotent of toil,
Let the grave sceptre slip his lazy hold;
And, careless, saw his rule become the spoil
Of a loose Female and her minion bold.
But peace was on the cottage and the fold,
From court intrigue, from bickering faction far;
Beneath the chestnut-tree Love's tale was told,
And to the tinkling of the light guitar,
Sweet stoop'd the western sun, sweet rose the evening star.

XXXVI.

As that sea-cloud, in size like human hand,
When first from Carmel by the Tishbite seen,
Came slowly overshadowing Israel's land,
A while, perchance, bedeck'd with colours sheen,
While yet the sunbeams on its skirts had been,
Limning with purple and with gold its shroud,
Till darker folds obscured the blue serene,
And blotted heaven with one broad sable cloud,
Then sheeted rain burst down, and whirlwinds howl'd aloud:

XXXVII.

Even so, upon that peaceful scene was pour'd,
Like gathering clouds, full many a foreign band,
And HE, their Leader, wore in sheath his sword,
And offer'd peaceful front and open hand,
Veiling the perjured treachery he plann'd,
By friendship's zeal and honour's specious guise,
Until he won the passes of the land;
Then burst were honour's oath, and friendship's ties!
He clutch'd his vulture grasp, and call'd fair Spain his prize.

XXXVIII.

An Iron Crown his anxious forehead bore;
And well such diadem his heart became,
Who ne'er his purpose for remorse gave o'er,
Or check'd his course for piety or shame;
Who, train'd a soldier, deem'd a soldier's fame
Might flourish in the wreath of battles won,
Though neither truth nor honour deck'd his name
Who, placed by fortune on a Monarch's throne,
Reck'd not of Monarch's faith, or Mercy's kingly tone.

XXXIX.

From a rude isle his ruder lineage came,
The spark, that, from a suburb-hovel's hearth
Ascending, wraps some capital in flame,
Hath not a meaner or more sordid birth.
And for the soul that bade him waste the earth—
The sable land-flood from some swamp obscure,
That poisons the glad husband-field with dearth,
And by destruction bids its fame endure,
Hath not a source more sullen, stagnant, and impure.

XL.

Before that Leader strode a shadowy Form;
 Her limbs like mist, her torch like meteor show'd,
 With which she beckon'd him through fight and storm.
 And all he crush'd that cross'd his desperate road.
 Nor thought, nor fear'd, nor look'd on what he trode.
 Realms could not glut his pride, blood could not slake.
 So oft as e'er she shook her torch abroad—
 It was AMBITION bade her terrors wake,
 Nor deign'd she, as of yore, a milder form to take.

XLI.

No longer now she spurn'd at mean revenge,
 Or staid her hand for conquer'd foeman's moan;
 As when, the fates of aged Rome to change,
 By Caesar's side she cross'd the Rubicon.
 Nor joy'd she to bestow the spoils she won,
 As when the banded powers of Greece were task'd
 To war beneath the Youth of Macedon:
 No seemly veil her modern minion ask'd,
 He saw her hideous face, and loved the fiend unmask'd.

XLII.

That Prelate mark'd his march—On banners blazed
 With battles won in many a distant land,
 On eagle-standards and on arms he gazed;
 "And hopest thou then," he said, "thy power shall stand
 O! thou has builded on the shifting sand,
 And thou hast temper'd it with slaughter's flood;
 And know, fell scourge in the Almighty's hand,
 Gore-moisten'd trees shall perish in the bud,
 And by a bloody death, shall die the Man of Blood!"

XLIII.

The ruthless Leader beckon'd from his train
 A wan fraternal Shade, and bade him kneel,
 And paled his temples with the crown of Spain,
 While trumpets rang, and heralds cried "Castile!"
 Not that he loved him—No!—In no man's weal,
 Scarce in his own, e'er joy'd that sullen heart;
 Yet round that throne he bade his warriors wheel,
 That the poor puppet might perform his part,
 And be a sceptred slave, at his stern beck to start.

XLIV.

But on the Natives of that Land misused,
 Not long the silence of amazement hung,
 Nor brook'd they long their friendly faith abused;
 For, with a common shriek, the general tongue
 Exclaim'd, "To arms!"—and fast to arms they sprung.
 And VALOUR woke, that Genius of the Land!
 Pleasure, and ease, and sloth, aside he flung,
 As burst the awakening Nazarene his band,
 When 'gainst his treacherous foes he clench'd his dreadful band

XLV.

That Mimic Monarch now cast anxious eye
 Upon the Satraps that begirt him round,
 Now doff'd his royal robe in act to fly,
 And from his brow the diadem unbound.
 So oft, so near, the Patriot bugle wound,
 From Tarick's walls to Bilboa's mountains blown,
 These martial satellites hard labour found,
 To guard a while his substituted throne—
 Light recking of his cause, but battling for their own.

XLVI.

From Alpuhara's peak that bugle rung,
 And it was echo'd from Corunna's wall;
 Stately Seville responsive war-shot flung,
 Grenada caught it in her Moorish hall;
 Galicia bade her children fight or fall,
 Wild Biscay shook his mountain-coronet,
 Valencia roused her at the battle-call,
 And, foremost still where Valour's sons are met,
 First started to his gun each fiery Miquelet.

XLVII.

But unappall'd, and burning for the fight,
 The Invaders march, of victory secure;
 Skilful their force to sever or unite,
 And train'd alike to vanquish or endure.
 Nor skilful less, cheap conquest to ensure,
 Discord to breathe, and jealousy to sow,
 To quell by boasting, and by bribes to lure;
 While nought against them bring the unpractised foe,
 Save hearts for Freedom's cause, and hands for Freedom's blow

XLVIII.

Proudly they march—but, O! they march not forth
 By one hot field to crown a brief campaign,
 As when their Eagles, sweeping through the North,
 Destroy'd at every stoop an ancient reign!
 Far other fate had Heaven decreed for Spain;
 In vain the steel, in vain the torch was plied,
 New Patriot armies started from the slain,
 High blazed the war, and long, and far, and wide,¹⁰
 And oft the God of Battles blest the righteous side.

XLIX.

Nor unatoned, where Freedom's foes prevail,
 Remain'd their savage waste. With blade and brand,
 By day the Invaders ravaged hill and dale,
 But, with the darkness, the Guerilla band
 Came like night's tempest, and avenged the land,
 And claim'd for blood the retribution due,
 Probed the hard heart, and lopp'd the murd'rous hand;
 And Dawn, when o'er the scene her beams she threw
 Midst ruins they had made, the spoilers' corpses knew.

L.

What minstrel verse may sing, or tongue may tell,
 Amid the vision'd strife from sea to sea,
 How oft the Patriot banners rose or fell,
 Still honour'd in defeat as victory!
 For that sad pageant of events to be,
 Show'd every form of fight by field and flood;
 Slaughter and Ruin, shouting forth their glee,
 Beheld, while riding on the tempest scud,
 The waters choked with slain, the earth bedrench'd with blood.

L.I.

Then Zaragoza—blighted be the tongue
 That names thy name without the honour due!
 For never hath the harp of Minstrel rung,
 Of faith so felly proved, so firmly true!
 Mine, sap, and bomb, thy shatter'd ruins knew,
 Each art of war's extremity had room,
 Twice from thy half-sack'd streets the foe withdrew,
 And when at length stern fate decreed thy doom,
 They won not Zaragoza, but her children's bloody tomb.¹¹

L.II.

Yet raise thy head, sad city! Though in chains,
 Enthral'd thou canst not be! Arise, and claim
 Reverence from every heart where Freedom reigns,
 For what thou worshippest!—thy sainted dame,
 She of the Column, honour'd be her name
 By all, whate'er their creed, who honour love!
 And like the sacred relics of the flame,
 That gave some martyr to the bless'd above,
 To every loyal heart may thy sad embers prove!

L.III.

Nor thine alone such wreck. Gerona fair!
 Faithful to death thy heroes shall be sung,
 Manning the towers, while o'er their heads the air
 Swart as the smoke from raging furnace hung;
 Now thicker dark'ning where the mine was sprung,
 Now briefly lighten'd by the cannon's flare,
 Now arch'd with fire-sparks by the bomb was flung,
 And redd'ning now with conflagration's glare,
 While by the fatal light the foes for storm prepare.

L.IV.

While all around was danger, strife, and fear,
 While the earth shook, and darken'd was the sky
 And wide Destruction stunn'd the listening ear,
 Appall'd the heart, and stupified the eye,—
 Afar was heard that thrice-repeated cry,
 In which old Albion's heart and tongue unite,
 Whene'er her soul is up, and pulse beats high,
 Whether it hail the wine-cup or the fight,
 And bid each arm be strong, or bid each heart be light.

LV.

Don Roderick turn'd him as the shout grew loud—
 A varied scene the changeful vision show'd,
 For, where the ocean mingled with the cloud,
 A gallant navy stemm'd the billows broad.
 From mast and stern, St George's symbol flow'd,
 Blent with the silver cross to Scotland dear;
 Mottling the sea their landward barges row'd,
 And flash'd the sun on bayonet, brand, and spear
 And the wild beach return'd the seamen's jovial cheer.

LVI.

It was a dread, yet spirit-stirring sight!—
 The billows foam'd beneath a thousand oars;
 Fast as they land, the red-cross ranks unite,
 Legions on legions bright'ning all the shores;
 Then banners rise, and cannon-signal roars,
 Then peals the warlike thunder of the drum,
 Thrills the loud fife, the trumpet-flourish pours,
 And patriot hopes awake, and doubts are dumb,
 For, bold in Freedom's cause, the bands of Ocean come!

LVII.

A various host they came—whose ranks display
 Each mode in which the warrior meets the fight:
 The deep battalion locks its firm array,
 And meditates his aim the marksman light;
 Far glance the light of sabres flashing bright,
 Where mounted squadrons shake the echoing mead;
 Lacks not artillery breathing flame and night,
 Nor the fleet ordnance whirl'd by rapid steed,
 That rivals lightning's flash in ruin and in speed.

LVIII.

A various host—from kindred realms they came,
 Brethren in arms, but rivals in renown—
 For yon fair bands shall merry England claim,
 And with their deeds of valour deck her crown.
 Hers their bold port, and hers their martial frown,
 And hers their scorn of death in freedom's cause,
 Their eyes of azure, and their locks of brown,
 And the blunt speech that bursts without a pause,
 And freeborn thoughts, which league the Soldier with the Laws

LIX.

And, O! loved warriors of the Minstrel's land!
 Yonder your bonnets nod, your tartans wave!
 The rugged form may mark the mountain band,
 And harsher features, and a mien more grave;
 But ne'er in battle-field throbb'd heart so brave
 As that which beats beneath the Scottish plaid;
 And when the pibroch bids the battle rave,
 And level for the charge your arms are laid,
 Where lives the desperate foe that for such onset staid!

LX.

Hark! from yon stately ranks what laughter rings,
Mingling wild mirth with war's stern minstrelsy,
His jest while each blithe comrade round him flings,
And moves to death with military glee!
Boast, Erin, boast them! tameless, frank, and free,
In kindness warm, and fierce in danger known,
Rough nature's children, humorous as she:
And He, yon Chieftain—strike the proudest tone
Of thy bold harp, green Isle!—the Hero is thine own.

LXI.

Now on the scene Vimeira should be shown,
On Talavera's fight should Roderick gaze,
And hear Corunna wail her battle won,
And see Busaco's crest with lightning blaze:—
But shall fond fable mix with heroes' praise?
Hath Fiction's stage for Truth's long triumphs room?
And dare her wild-flowers mingle with the bays,
That claim a long eternity to bloom
Around the warrior's crest, and o'er the warrior's tomb?

LXII.

Or may I give adventurous Fancy scope,
And stretch a bold hand to the awful veil
That hides futurity from anxious hope,
Bidding beyond it scenes of glory hail,
And painting Europe rousing at the tale
Of Spair's invaders from her confines hurl'd,
While kindling nations buckle on their mail,
And Fame, with clarion-blast and wings unfurl'd,
To Freedom and Revenge awakes an injured World?

LXIII.

O vain, though anxious, is the glance I cast,
Since Fate has mark'd futurity her own:
Yet Fate resigns to Worth the glorious past,
The deeds recorded, and the laurels won.
Then, though the Vault of Destiny¹² be gone,
King, Prelate, all the phantasms of my brain,
Melted away like mist-wreaths in the sun,
Yet grant for faith, for valour, and for Spain,
One note of pride and fire, a Patriot's parting strain!

CONCLUSION.

I.

"Who shall command Estrella's mountain-tide
Back to the source, when tempest-chafed, to hie?
Who, when Gascogne's vex'd gulf is raging wide,
Shall hush it as a nurse her infant's cry?
His magic power let such vain boaster try,
And when the torrent shall his voice obey,
And Biscay's whirlwinds list his lullaby,
Let him stand forth and bar mine eagles' way,
And they shall heed his voice, and at his bidding stay.

II.

"Else ne'er to stoop, till high on Lisbon's towers
They close their wings, the symbol of our yoke,
And their own sea hath whelm'd yon red-cross powers!"
Thus, on the summit of Alverca's rock,
To Marshal, Duke, and Peer, Gaul's Leader spoke.
While downward on the land his legions press,
Before them it was rich with vine and flock,
And smiled like Eden in her summer dress;—
Behind their wasteful march a reeking wilderness.¹³

III.

And shall the boastful Chief maintain his word,
Though Heaven hath heard the wailings of the land,
Though Lusitania whet her vengeful sword,
Though Britons arm, and WELLINGTON command?
No! grim Busaco's iron ridge shall stand
An adamant barrier to his force;
And from its base shall wheel his shatter'd band,
As from the unshaken rock the torrent hoarse
Bears off its broken waves, and seeks a devious course.

IV.

Yet not because Alcoba's mountain-hawk
Hath on his best and bravest made her food,
In numbers confident, yon Chief shall baulk
His Lord's imperial thirst for spoil and blood:
For full in view the promised conquest stood,
And Lisbon's matrons from their walls, might sum
The myriads that had half the world subdued,
And hear the distant thunders of the drum,
That bids the bands of France to storm and havoc come.

V.

Four moons have heard these thunders idly roll'd,
Have seen these wistful myriads eye their prey,

As famish'd wolves survey a guarded fold—
 But in the middle path a Lion lay!
 At length they move—but not to battle-fray,
 Nor blaze yon fires where meets the manly fight:
 Beacons of infamy, they light the way
 Where cowardice and cruelty unite
 To damn with double shame their ignominious flight!

VI.

O triumph for the Fiends of Lust and Wrath!
 Ne'er to be told, yet ne'er to be forgot,
 What wanton horrors mark'd their wreckful path!—
 The peasant butcher'd in his ruin'd cot,
 The hoary priest even at the altar shot,
 Childhood and age given o'er to sword and flame,
 Woman to infamy;—no crime forgot,
 By which inventive demons might proclaim
 Immortal hate to man, and scorn of God's great name!

VII.

The rudest sentinel, in Britain born,
 With horror paused to view the havoc done,
 Gave his poor crust to feed some wretch forlorn,¹⁴
 Wiped his stern eye, then fiercer grasp'd his gun.
 Nor with less zeal shall Britain's peaceful son
 Exult the debt of sympathy to pay;
 Riches nor poverty the tax shall shun,
 Nor prince nor peer, the wealthy nor the gay,
 Nor the poor peasant's mite, nor bard's more worthless lay.

VIII.

But thou—unfoughten wilt thou yield to Fate,
 Minion of Fortune, now miscall'd in vain!
 Can vantage-ground no confidence create,
 Marcella's pass, nor Guarda's mountain-chain?
 Vainglorious fugitive!¹⁵ yet turn again!
 Behold, where, named by some prophetic Seer,
 Flows Honour's Fountain,^a as foredoom'd the stain
 From thy dishonour'd name and arms to clear—
 Fallen Child of Fortune, turn, redeem her favour here!

IX.

Yet, ere thou turn'st, collect each distant aid;
 Those chief that never heard the lion roar!
 Within whose souls lives not a trace portray'd,
 Of Talavera, or Mondego's shore!
 Marshal each band thou hast, and summon more;
 Of war's fell stratagems exhaust the whole;
 Rank upon rank, squadron on squadron pour,
 Legion on legion on thy foeman roll,
 And weary out his arm—thou canst not quell his soul.

^a The literal translation of *Fuentes d'Honoro*.

X.

O vainly gleams with steel Agueda's shore,
 Vainly thy squadrons hide Assuava's plain,
 And front the flying thunders as they roar,
 With frantic charge and tenfold odds, in vain!¹⁶
 And what avails thee that, for CAMERON slain,¹⁷
 Wild from his plaided ranks the yell was given—
 Vengeance and grief gave mountain-rage the rein,
 And, at the bloody spear-point headlong driven,
 Thy Despot's giant guards fled like the rack of heaven.

XI.

Go, baffled boaster! teach thy haughty mood
 To plead at thine imperious master's throne;
 Say, thou hast left his legions in their blood,
 Deceived his hopes, and frustrated thine own;
 Say, that thine utmost skill and valour shown,
 By British skill and valour were outvied;
 Last say, thy conqueror was WELLINGTON!
 And if he chafe, be his own fortune tried—
 God and our cause to friend, the venture we'll abide.

XII.

But you, ye heroes of that well-fought day,
 How shall a bard unknowing and unknown,
 His meed to each victorious leader pay,
 Or bind on every brow the laurels won?
 Yet fain my harp would wake its boldest tone,
 O'er the wide sea to hail CADOGAN brave;
 And he, perchance, the minstrel-note might own,
 Mindful of meeting brief that Fortune gave
 'Mid yon far western isles that hear the Atlantic rave.

XIII.

Yes! hard the task, when Britons wield the sword,
 To give each Chief and every field its fame:
 Hark! Albuera thunders BERESFORD!
 And Red Barossa shouts for dauntless GRÆME!
 O for a verse of tumult and of flame,
 Bold as the bursting of their cannon sound,
 To bid the world re-echo to their fame!
 For never, upon gory battle-ground,
 With conquest's well-bought wreath were braver victors
 crown'd!

XIV.

O who shall grudge him Albuera's bays,
 Who brought a race regenerate to the field,
 Roused them to emulate their fathers' praise,
 Temper'd their headlong rage, their courage steel'd,¹⁸
 And raised fair Lusitania's fallen shield,
 And gave new edge to Lusitania's sword,
 And taught her sons forgotten arms to wield—
 Shiver'd my harp, and burst its every chord,
 If it forget thy worth, victorious BERESFORD!

XV.

Not on that bloody field of battle won,
 Though Gaul's proud legions roll'd like mist away
 Was half his self-devoted valour shown,—
 He gaged but life on that illustrious day;
 But when he toil'd those squadrons to array,
 Who fought like Britons in the bloody game,
 Sharper than Polish pike or assagay,
 He braved the shafts of censure and of shame,
 And, dearer far than life, he pledged a soldier's fame.

XVI.

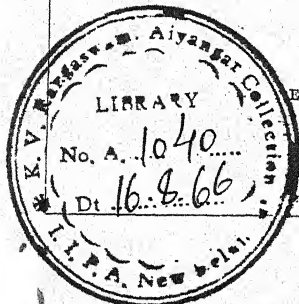
Nor be his praise o'erpast who strove to hide
 Beneath the warrior's vest affection's wound,
 Whose wish Heaven for his country's weal denied;
 Danger and fate he sought, but glory found.
 From clime to clime, where'er war's trumpets sound
 The wanderer went; yet, Caledonia! still
 Thine was his thought in march and tented ground;
 He dream'd 'mid Alpine cliffs of Athole's hill.
 And heard in Ebro's roar his Lyndoch's lovely rill.

XVII.

O hero of a race renown'd of old,
 Whose war-cry oft has waked the battle-swell,
 Since first distinguish'd in the onset bold,
 Wild sounding when the Roman rampart fell!
 By Wallace' side it rung the Southron's knell,
 Alderne, Kilsythe, and Tibber, own'd its fame,
 Tummell's rude pass can of its terrors tell,
 But ne'er from prouder field arose the name,
 Than when wild Ronda learn'd the conquering shout of
 GRÆME!¹⁹

XVIII.

But all too long, through seas unknown and dark,
 (With Spenser's parable I close my tale,)
 By shoal and rock hath steer'd my venturous bark,
 And landward now I drive before the gale.
 And now the blue and distant shore I hail,
 And nearer now I see the port expand,
 And now I gladly furl my weary sail,
 And as the prow light touches on the strand,
 I strike my red-cross flag, and bind my skiff to land.



END OF VOL. I.